

School Edition

THE WORKS  
OF  
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE

*IN FOUR PARTS*

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# IDYLLS OF THE KING

## DEDICATION

THESE to His Memory—since he held  
    them dear,  
Perchance as finding there unconsciously  
Some image of himself—I dedicate,  
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—  
These Idylls

And indeed He seems to me  
Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,  
'Who revered his conscience as his  
    king,  
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong,  
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd  
    to it,  
Who loved one only and who claved to her—'  
Her—over all whose realms to their last  
    isle,  
Commingled with the gloom of imminent  
    wail,  
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,  
Darkening the world We have lost  
    him he is gone  
We know him now all narrow jealousies  
Are silent, and we see him as he moved,  
How modest, kindly, all accomplish'd,  
    wise,  
With what sublime repression of himself,  
And in what limits, and how tenderly,  
Not swaying to this faction or to that,  
Not making his high place the lawless  
    perch  
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage ground  
For pleasure, but thro' all this tract of  
    years  
Wearing the white flower of a blameless  
    life,

Before a thousand peering littlenesses,  
In that fierce light which beats upon a  
    throne,  
And blackens every blot for where is he,  
Who dares foreshadow for an only son  
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his?  
Or how should England dierming of *his*,  
    sons

Hope more for these than some inheritance  
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,  
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,  
Laborious for her people and her poor—  
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—  
Far-sighted summoner of Woe and Waste  
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—  
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam  
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,  
Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,  
Beyond all titles, and a household name,  
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albeit the Good

Break not, O woman's heart, but still  
    endure,  
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,  
Remembering all the beauty of that star  
Which shone so close beside Thee that  
    ye made  
One light together, but has past and leaves  
The Crown a lonely splendour

May all love,  
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,  
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,  
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,  
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,  
Till God's love set Thee at his side again!



## THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN, the King of Camelard,  
Had one fair daughter, and none other  
child,  
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,  
Guinevere, and in her his one delight

For many a petty king ere Arthur came  
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war  
Each upon other, wasted all the land,  
And still from time to time the heathen  
host  
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was  
left  
And so there grew great tracts of wilder-  
ness,  
Wherein the beast was ever more and  
more,  
But man was less and less, till Arthur  
came  
For first Aurelius lived and fought and  
died,  
And after him King Uther fought and died,  
But either failed to make the kingdom  
one  
And after these King Arthur for a space,  
And thro' the puissance of his Table  
Round,  
Drew all their petty principdoms under  
him,  
Their king and head, and made a realm,  
and reign'd

And thus the land of Camelard was  
waste,  
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast  
therein,  
And none or few to scare or chase the  
beast,  
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and  
bear  
Came night and day, and rooted in the  
fields,  
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King  
And ever and anon the wolf would steal  
The children and devour, but now and  
then,  
Her own blood lost or dead, lent her  
fierce teat

To human sucklings, and the children,  
housed  
In her foul den, there at their meat would  
growl,  
And mock their foster mother on four feet,  
Till, straiten'd, they grew up to wolf  
like men,  
Worse than the wolves And King  
Leodogran  
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,  
And Caesar's eagle then his brother king,  
Urien, assail'd him last a heathen horde,  
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth  
with blood,  
And on the spit e that split the mother's  
heart  
Spitting the child, brake on him, till,  
amazed,  
He knew not whither he should turn for  
aid

But—for he heard of Arthur newly  
crown'd,  
Tho' not without uproar made by those  
who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the  
King  
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us  
thou'  
For here between the man and beast we  
die'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of  
arms,  
But heard the call, and came and  
Guinevere  
Stood by the castle walls to watch him  
pass,  
But since he neither wore on helm or  
shield  
The golden symbol of his kingship,  
But rode a simple knight among his  
knights,  
And many of these in richer arms than he,  
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she  
saw,  
One among many, tho' his face was bare  
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,  
Felt the light of her eyes into his life

Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and  
pitch'd  
His tents beside the forest Then he  
drove  
The heathen, after, slew the beast, and  
fell'd  
The forest, letting in the sun, and made  
Broad pathways for the hunter and the  
knight  
And so return'd

For while he linger'd there,  
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts  
Of those great Lords and Barons of his  
realm  
Flash'd forth and into war for most of  
these,  
Collenguing with a score of petty kings,  
Made head against him, crying, 'Who  
is he  
That he should rule us? who hath proven  
him  
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,  
And find no face nor bearing, limbs nor  
voice,  
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew  
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King,  
This is the son of Anton, not the King'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,  
felt  
Triaval, and throes and agonies of the life,  
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere,  
And thinking as he rode, 'If my father said  
That there between the man and beast  
they die  
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts  
Up to my throne, and side by side with  
me?  
What happiness to reign a lonely king,  
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,  
O earth that soundest hollow under me,  
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be  
join'd  
To her that is the fairest under heaven,  
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,  
And cannot will my will, nor work my  
work  
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own  
realm

Victor and lord . But were I join'd with  
her,  
Then might we live together as one life,  
And reigning with one will in everything  
Have power on this dark land to lighten  
it,  
And power on this dead world to make  
it live'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the  
tale—  
When Arthur reach'd a field of-battle  
bright  
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the  
world  
Was all so clear about him, that he saw  
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,  
And even in high day the morning star  
So when the King had set his banner  
broad,  
At once from either side, with trumpet-  
blast,  
And shouts, and clarions shilling unto  
blood,  
The long linc'd battle let their horses  
run  
And now the Barons and the kings pie-  
c'd,  
And now the King, as here and there  
that war  
Went swaying, but the Powers who walk  
the world  
Made lightnings and great thunders over  
him,  
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by man  
might,  
And mightier of his hands with every  
blow,  
And leading all his knighthood threw the  
kings  
Carados, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,  
Claudias, and Clarence of Northumber-  
land,  
The King Brandagoras of Latangoi,  
With Angusant of Erin, Morganoie,  
And Lot of Orkney Then, before a voice  
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees  
To one who sins, and deems himself alone  
And all the world asleep, they swerved  
and brake

Flying, and Arthur cull'd to stay the  
brands

That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho ! they  
yield !'

So like a painted battle the war stood  
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,  
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord  
Helugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved  
And honour'd most 'Thou dost not  
doubt me King,

So well thine arm hath wrought for me  
to day '

'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of  
God

Descends upon thee in the battle field

I know thee for my King !' Whereat the  
two,

For each had waded either in the fight,  
Swore on the field of death a deathless  
love

And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in  
man

Let chance what will, I trust thee to the  
death '

Then quickly from the foughten field  
he sent

Ulfius, and Briasas, and Bedivere,  
His new made knights, to King Leodog-  
ran,

Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee  
well,

Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife '

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in  
heart

Debating—'How should I that am a  
king,

However much he help me at my need,  
Give my one daughter saving to a king,

And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and  
call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom  
He trusted all things, and of him required  
His counsel 'Knowest thou aught of  
Arthur's birth ?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and  
said,

'Sir King, there be but two old men that  
know

And each is twice as old as I, and one  
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served  
King Uther this his magic art, and one  
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bley-  
s, Who taught him magic, but the scholar  
was

Before the master, and so far, that Bley-  
s laid magic by, and sat him down, and  
wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did  
In one great annual book, where after years  
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth '

To whom the King Leodogran replied,  
'O friend, had I been helpen half as well  
By this King Arthur as by thee to day,  
I then beast and man had had then share  
of me

But summon he c before us yet once more  
Ulfius, and Briasas, and Bedivere '

Then, when they came before him, the  
King said,

'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser  
fowl,

And reason in the chase but wherefore  
now

Do these your loads stir up the heat of  
war,

Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,  
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye your  
selves,

Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Briasas answer'd, 'Ay '  
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights  
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,  
spoke—

For bold in heart and act and word was  
he,

Whenever slander breathed against the  
King—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this  
head

For there be those who hate him in their  
hearts,

Call him baseborn, and since his ways are  
sweet,

And thus we bestial, hold him less than  
man

And there be those who deem him more  
than man,  
And dream he dopt from heaven but  
my belief

In all this matter—so ye care to learn—  
Su, for ye know that in King Uther's  
time

The pince and warrior Gorlois, he that  
held

Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,  
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne  
And daughters had she borne him,—one  
whereof,

Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-  
cent,

Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved  
To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne  
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love  
But she, a stunless wife to Gorlois,  
So loathed the bight dishonour of his  
love,

That Gorlois and King Uther went to war  
And overthrown was Gorlois and slain  
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged  
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,  
Seeing the mighty swarm about their  
walls,

Left her and fled, and Uther entered in,  
And there was none to call to but himself  
So, compass'd by the power of the King,  
Enforced she was to wed him in her towers,  
And with a shameful swiftness after-  
ward,

Not many moons, King Uther died him-  
self,

Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule  
After him, lest the realm should go to  
wrack

And that same night, the night of the new  
year,

By reason of the bitterness and grief  
That vexed his mother, all before his time  
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born  
Deliver'd at a secret postern gate  
To Merlin, to be holden far apart  
Until his hour should come, because the  
lords

Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,  
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn  
the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known,  
for each

But sought to rule for his own self and  
hand,

And many hated Uther for the sake  
Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the  
child,

And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight  
And ancient friend of Uther, and his wife  
Nursed the young pince, and rear'd him  
with her own,

And no man knew. And ever since the  
lords

Have foughten like wild beasts among  
themselves,

So that the realm has gone to wrack  
but now,

This year, when Merlin (for his hour had  
come)

Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the  
hall,

Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your  
king,"

A hundred voices cried, 'Away with him!  
No king of ours! A son of Gorlois he,  
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,  
Or else baseborn.' Yet Merlin thro' his  
craft,

And while the people clamour'd for a king,  
Had Arthur crown'd, but after, the great  
lords

Divided, and so broke out in open war'

Then while the King debated with  
himself

If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,  
Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,  
Or Uther's son, and born before his  
time,

Or whether there were truth in anything  
Said by these three, there came to Camel-  
lud,

With Gawain and young Mordred, her two  
sons,

Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-  
cent,

Whom as he could, not as he would, the  
King

Made first for, saying, as they sat at  
meat,

“A doubtful throne is ice on summer  
seas  
Ye come from Arthur’s court Victo’ his  
men  
Report him ! Yea, but ye—think ye this  
king—  
So many those that hate him, and so  
strong,  
So few his knights, however brave they  
be—  
Hath body enow to hold his foemen  
down ?”

“O King,” she cried, “and I will tell  
thee few,  
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with  
him,  
For I was near him when the savage yells  
Of Uther’s peerage died, and Arthur sat  
Crown’d on the dais, and his war ois  
cried,  
“Be thou the king, and we will work thy  
will  
Who love thee” Then the King in low  
deep tones,  
And simple words of great authority,  
Bound them by so strict vows to his own  
self,  
That when they rose, knighted from  
kneeling, some  
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,  
Some flush’d, and others dazed, as one  
who wakes  
Half blinded at the coming of a light

“But when he spake and cheer’d his  
Table Round  
With huge divine and comfortable words  
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld  
From eye to eye thro’ all their Order flash  
A momentary likeness of the King  
And ere it left their faces, thro’ the cross  
And those around it and the Crucified,  
Down from the casement over Arthur,  
smote  
Flame colour, red and rime, in three  
rays,  
One falling upon each of three fair queens,  
Who stood in silence near his throne, the  
friends

III

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright  
Sweet faces, who will help him at his  
need

“And there I saw mage Merlin, whose  
vast wit  
And hundred winters are but as the hands  
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege

“And near him stood the Lady of the  
Lake,  
Who knows a subtler magic than his  
own—  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder  
ful

She gave the King his huge cross hilted  
sword,  
Whereby to drive the heathen out a mist  
Of incense curl’d about her, and her face  
Wellnigh was hidden in the minister  
gloom,  
But there was heard among the holy  
hymns

A voice as of the waters, for she dwells  
Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms  
May shake the world, and when the  
surface rolls,  
Hath power to walk the waters like our  
Lord

“There likewise I beheld Excalibur  
Before him at his crowning boine, the  
sword

That rose from out the bosom of the lake,  
And Arthur row’d across and took it—rich  
With jewels, elfin Urm, on the hilt,  
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so  
bright

That men were blinded by it—on one side,  
Given in the oldest tongue of all this  
world,

“I like me” but turn the blade and ye  
shall see,

And witten in the speech ye speak your  
self,

“Cist me away !” And sad was Arthur’s  
face

I think it, but old Merlin counsel’d him,  
“Take thou and strike ! the time to cist  
away

12

Is yet fu-off" So this gient brand the  
king  
Took, and by this will beat his foemen  
down'

Thereat Leodogrian rejoiced, but  
thought

To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask d,  
Fixing full eyes of question on hei face,  
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,  
But thou art closer to this noble prince,  
Being his own den sister,' and she said,  
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygcine am I.'  
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask d  
the King

She answer'd, 'These be secret things,'  
and sign'd

To those two sons to pass and let them be  
And Gawain went, and breaking into song  
Spiang out, and follow'd by his flying hau  
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw  
But Modied laid his en beside the doors,  
And there half heaid, the same that  
afterward

Struck for the throne, and striking found  
his doom

And then the Queen made answer  
'What know I?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hau,  
And dark in hau and eyes am I, and dark  
Was Gorlois, yer and dark was Uther too,  
Wellnigh to blackness, but this King is  
fu

Beyond the race of Butons and of men  
Moreover, always in my mind I hear  
A cry from out the dawning of my life,  
A mother weeping, and I hear hei say,  
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,  
To guard thee on the rough ways of the  
world"

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye  
such a cry?

But when did Arthur chance upon thee  
first?

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell  
thee true

He found me first when yet a little mnd  
Beaten I had been for a little fault

Whereof I was not guilty, and out I ran  
And flung myself down on a bank of  
heath,

And hated this fair world and all therein,  
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead,  
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,  
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say,  
can walk

Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side  
And spoke sweet words, and comforted  
my heart,

And died my tears, being a child with me  
And many a time he came, and ever more  
As I grew greater grew with me, and sad  
At times he seem'd, and sid with him  
as I,

Sten too at times, and then I loved him  
not,

But sweet again, and then I loved him  
well

And now of late I see him less and less,  
But those first days had golden hours for  
me,

For then I surely thought he would be  
king

'But let me tell thee now another tale  
For Bley, our Merlin's master, as they  
say,

Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,  
To hear him speak before he left his life  
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the  
mage,

And when I enter'd told me that himself  
And Merlin ever scived about the King,  
Uther, before he died, and on the night  
When Uther in Tintagel past away  
Morning and wailing for an heir, the two  
Left the still King, and passing forth to  
breathe,

Then from the castle gateway by the  
chasm

Descending thro' the dismal night—a  
night

In which the bounds of heaven and earth  
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps  
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape  
thereof

A<sup>c</sup> dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern

Bright with a shining people on the decks,  
And gone as soon as seen. And then  
the two

Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great  
sea fall,

Wave after wave, each mightier than the  
last,

Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the  
deep

And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged  
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:  
And down the wave and in the flame was  
borne

A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,  
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and  
cried "The King!

Here is an heir for Uther!" And the  
fringe

Of that great breaker, sweeping up the  
strand,

Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,  
And all at once all round him rose in fire,  
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.  
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,  
Free sky and stars: "And this same  
child," he said,

"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in  
peace

Till this were told." And saying this the  
seer

Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of  
death,

Not ever to be question'd any more  
Save on the further side; but when I met  
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were  
truth—

The shining dragon and the naked child  
Descending in the glory of the seas—  
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me  
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in  
the sky!

A young man will be wiser by and by;  
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the  
lea!

And truth is this to me, and that to thee;

And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free  
blossom blows:

Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he  
who knows?

From the great deep to the great deep he  
goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but  
thou

Fear not to give this King thine only child,  
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing  
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old  
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of  
men,

And echo'd by old folk beside their fires  
For comfort after their wage-work is done,  
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our  
time

Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn  
Tho' men may wound him that he will  
not die,

But pass, again to come; and then or now  
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,  
Till these and all men hail him for their  
king.'

Shespake and King Leodogran rejoiced,  
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'  
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept,  
and saw,

Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,  
Field after field, up to a height, the peak  
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom  
-king,

Now looming, and now lost; and on the  
slope

The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd  
was driven,

Fire glimpsed; and all the land from  
roof and rick,

In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,  
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with  
the haze

And made it thicker; while the phantom  
king

Sent out at times a voice; and here or there  
Stood one who pointed toward the voice,  
the rest

Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of  
ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours ,'  
Till with a wink his dream was changed,  
the haze  
Descended, and the solid earth became  
As nothing, but the King stood out in  
heaven,  
Crown'd And Leodogian awoke, and  
sent  
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,  
Back to the court of Arthur answering yet

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom  
he loved  
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride  
forth  
And bring the Queen ,—and watch'd him  
from the gates  
And Lancelot past away among the  
flowers,  
(For then was latter April) and return'd  
Among the flowers, in May, with Guine-  
vere

To whom arrived, by Dubric the high  
saint,  
Chief of the church in Britun, and before  
The stateliest of her altars shines, the  
King

That morn was married, while in stainless  
white,

The fair beginnings of a nobler time,  
And glorying in their vows and him, his  
knights

Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy  
Far shone the fields of May thro' open  
door,

Thesacred altar blossom'd white with May,  
The Sun of May descended on their King,  
They grazed on all earth's beauty in their  
Queen,

Roll'd incense, and there past along the  
hymns

A voice as of the waters, while the two  
Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless  
love

And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is  
mine

Let chance what will, I love thee to the  
death '

To whom the Queen replied with drooping  
eyes,

'King and my lord, I love thee to the  
death '

And holy Dubric spread his hands and  
spoke,

'Reign ye, and live and love, and make  
the world

Other, and may thy Queen be one with  
thee,

And all this Order of thy Table Round  
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their  
King '

So Dubric said , but when they left the  
shrine

Great Lords from Rome before the portal  
stood,

In scornful stillness grazing as they past ,  
Then while they paced a city all on fire

With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets  
blew,

And Arthur's knighthood sang before the  
King —

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white  
with May ,

Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd  
away '

Blow thro' the living world—"Let the  
King reign "

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in  
Arthur's realm ?

Flash brand and lance, full battleaxe upon  
helm,

Full battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the  
King reign

'Strike for the King and live ! his  
knights have heard

That God hath told the King a secret  
word

Full battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the  
King reign

'Blow trumpet ! he will lift us from  
the dust

Blow trumpet ! live the strength and die  
the lust '

Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let  
the King reign



‘Strike for the King and die ! and if  
thou diest,  
The King is King, and ever wills the  
highest.

Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let  
the King reign.

‘Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his  
May !  
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day !  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let  
the King reign.

‘The King will follow Christ, and we  
the King  
In whom high God hath breathed a secret  
thing.

Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the  
King reign.’

So sang the knighthood, moving to their  
hall.  
There at the banquet those great Lords  
from Rome,  
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,  
Strode in, and claim’d their tribute as of  
yore.

But Arthur spake, ‘Behold, for these have  
sworn

To wage my wars, and worship me their  
King ;

The old order changeth, yielding place  
to new ;

And we that fight for our fair father  
Christ,

Seeing that ye be grown too weak and  
old

To drive the heathen from your Roman  
wall,

No tribute will we pay :’ so those great  
lords

Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove  
with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a  
space

Were all one will, and thro’ that strength  
the King

Drew in the petty principdoms under him,  
Fought, and in twelve great battles over-  
came

The heathen hordes, and made a realm  
and reign’d.

### THE ROUND TABLE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.  
GERAINT AND ENID.  
MERLIN AND VIVIAN.  
LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

THE HOLY GRAIL.  
PELLEAS AND ETGARRE.  
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.  
GUINEVERE.

#### GARETH AND LYNETTE.

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,  
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring  
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted  
Pine

Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl’d away.  
‘How he went down,’ said Gareth, ‘as  
a false knight

Or evil king before my lance if lance  
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,  
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—  
And yet thou art but swollen with cold  
snows

And mine is living blood : thou dost His  
will,

The Maker’s, and not knowest, and I  
that know,

Have strength and wit, in my good  
mother’s hall

Linger with vacillating obedience,  
Prison’d, and kept and coax’d and  
whistled to—

Since the good mother holds me still a  
child !

Good mother is bad mother unto me !  
A worse were better ; yet no worse  
would I.

Heaven yield her for it, but in me put  
force

To weary her ears with one continuous  
prayer,

Until she let me fly discaiged to sweep  
In ever highering eagle-circles up  
To the great Sun of Gloiy, and thence  
swoop

Down upon all things base, and dash  
them dead,

A knight of Arthur, working out his will,  
To cleanse the world Why, Gawain,  
when he came

With Modred hither in the summertime,  
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven  
knight

Modred for want of worthue was the  
judge

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he  
said,

"Thou hast half prevail'd agunst mc,"  
said so—he—

Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,  
For he is alway sullen what care I?

And Gareth went, and hovering round  
her chair

Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still  
the child,

Sweet mother, do ye love the child?'  
She laugh'd,

'Thou art but a wild goose to question  
it'

'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he  
said,

'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,  
Hear the child's story' 'Yea, my well-  
beloved,

An 'twere but of the goose and golden  
eggs'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling  
eyes,

'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of  
mine

Was finer gold than any goose can lay,  
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid  
Almost beyond eye reach, on such a palm  
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours  
And there was ever haunting round the  
palm

A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw  
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and  
thought

"An I could climb and lay my hand upon  
it,

Then were I wealthier than a leash of  
kings"

But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,  
One, that had loved him from his child  
hood, caught

And stry'd him, "Climb not lest thou  
break thy neck,

I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,  
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake  
his neck,

But brake his very heart in pining for it,  
And past away'

To whom the mother said,  
'True love, sweet son, had ask'd himself  
and climb'd,

And handed down the golden treasure to  
him'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling  
eyes,

'Gold?' said I gold?—ay then, why he,  
or she,

Or whoso'er it was, or half the world  
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of  
been

Mere gold—but this was all of that true  
steel,

Whereof they forged the brand Laculibur,  
And lightnings ply'd about it in the  
storm,

And all the little fowl were flumm'd at it,  
And there were cries and clashings in the  
nest,

That sent him from his senses let me go'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and  
said,

'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?  
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth  
Lies like a log, and all but smould'ring  
out'

For ever since when traitor to the King  
He fought agunst him in the Barons' war,  
And Arthur gave him back his territory,  
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies  
there

A yet warm corpse, and yet unburnable,

No more ; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks,  
 nor knows.  
 And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,  
 Albeit neither loved with that full love  
 I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love :  
 Stay therefore thou ; red berries charm  
 the bird,  
 And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the  
 wars,  
 Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang  
 Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often  
 chance  
 In those brain-stunning shocks, and  
 tourney-falls,  
 Frights to my heart ; but stay : follow  
 the deer  
 By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns ;  
 So make thy manhood mightier day by  
 day ;  
 Sweet is the chase : and I will seek thee  
 out  
 Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace  
 Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone  
 year,  
 Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness  
 I know not thee, myself, nor anything.  
 Stay, my best son ! ye are yet more boy  
 than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for  
 child,  
 Hear yet once more the story of the child.  
 For, mother, there was once a King, like  
 ours.  
 The prince his heir, when tall and  
 marriageable,  
 Ask'd for a bride ; and thereupon the  
 King  
 Set two before him. One was fair,  
 strong, arm'd—  
 But to be won by force—and many men  
 Desired her ; one, good lack, no man  
 desired.  
 And these were the conditions of the  
 King :  
 That save he won the first by force, he  
 needs  
 Must wed that other, whom no man  
 desired,  
 A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,

That evermore she long'd to hide herself,  
 Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—  
 Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died  
 of her.  
 And one—they call'd her Fame ; and  
 one,—O Mother,  
 How can ye keep me teth'rd to you—  
 Shame !  
 Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.  
 Follow the deer ? follow the Christ, the  
 King,  
 Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow  
 the King—  
 Else, wherefore born ?'

To whom the mother said,  
 'Sweet son, for there be many who deem  
 him not,  
 Or will not deem him, wholly proven  
 King—  
 Albeit in mine own heart I knew him  
 King,  
 When I was frequent with him in my  
 youth,  
 And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted  
 him  
 No more than he, himself ; but felt him  
 mine,  
 Of closest kin to me : yet—wilt thou leave  
 Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine  
 all,  
 Life, limbs, for one that is not proven  
 King ?  
 Stay, till the cloud that settles round his  
 birth  
 Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not  
 an hour,  
 So that ye yield me—I will walk thro'  
 fire,  
 Mother, to gain it—your full leave to  
 go.  
 Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd  
 Rome  
 From off the threshold of the realm, and  
 crush'd  
 The Idolaters, and made the people free ?  
 Who should be King save him who  
 makes us free ?'

So when the Queen, who long had  
sought in vain  
To break him from the intent to which  
he grew,  
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,  
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk thro'  
fire?  
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the  
smoke  
Ay, go then, in ye must only one proof,  
Before thou ask the King to make thee  
knight,  
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,  
Thy mother,—I demand'

And Gareth cried,  
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go  
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to  
the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking  
at him,  
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to  
Arthur's hall,  
And hie thyself to serve for meats and  
drinks  
Among the scullions and the kitchen-  
knaves,  
And those that hand the dish across the  
bar  
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone  
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and  
a day'

For so the Queen believed that when  
her son  
Beheld his only way to glory lead  
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,  
Her own true Gareth was too princely  
proud  
To pass thereby, so should he rest with  
her,  
Closed in her castle from the sound of  
arms

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,  
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,  
And I shall see the jousts Thy son am I,  
And since thou art my mother, must  
obey  
I therefore yield me freely to thy will,

For hence will I, disguised, and hie my  
self  
To serve with scullions and with kitchen  
knaves,  
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the  
King'

Gareth awhile linger'd The mother's  
eye  
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,  
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he  
turn'd,  
Perplex'd his outward purpose, till an hour,  
When waken'd by the wind which with  
full voice  
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to  
dawn,  
He rose, and out of slumber calling two  
That still had tended on him from his  
bath,  
Before the wakeful mother heard him,  
went

The three were clad like tillers of the  
soil  
Southward they set their faces The birds  
made  
Melody on branch, and melody in mid air  
The damp hill slopes were quicken'd into  
green,  
And the live green had kindled into  
flowers,  
For it was past the time of Easterday

So, when their feet were planted on  
the plain  
That broaden'd toward the base of Camel-  
lot,  
Far off they saw the silver misty moor  
Rolling her smoke about the Royal  
mount,  
That rose between the forest and the field  
At times the summit of the high city  
flash'd,  
At times the spires and turrets half way  
down  
Peek'd thro' the mist, at times the great  
gate shone  
Only, that open'd on the field below  
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd

Then those who went with Gareth were  
amazed,  
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lo!d  
Here is a city of Enchanters, built  
By fairy Kings' The second echo'd him,  
'Lo!d, we have heard from our wise man  
at home  
To Northward, that this King is not the  
King,  
But only changeling out of Fairyland,  
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery  
And Merlin's glamour' Then the first  
again,  
'Lo!d, there is no such city anywhere,  
But all a vision'

Gareth answer'd them  
With laughter, swearing he had glamour  
enow  
In his own blood, his princedom, youth  
and hopes,  
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian ser,  
So push'd them all unwilling toward the  
gate  
And there was no gate like it under  
heaven  
For bluefoot on the keystone, which was  
lined  
And rippled like an ever fleeting wave,  
The Lady of the Lake stood all her dress  
Wept from her sides as water flowing away,  
But like the cross her great and goodly  
arms  
Stretch'd under all the cornice and  
upheld  
And drops of water fell from either hand,  
And down from one a sword was hung,  
from one  
A censer, either worn with wind and  
storm,  
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish,  
And in the space to left of her, and right,  
Were Arthur's wondrous devices done,  
New things and old so twisted, as if Time  
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men  
Were giddy gazing there, and over all  
High on the top were those three Queens,  
the friends  
Of Arthur, who should help him at his  
need

Then those with Gareth for so long a  
space  
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd  
The dragon boughts and elvish emblem-  
ings  
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl  
they call'd  
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive'  
  
And Gareth likewise on them fixt his  
eyes  
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to  
move  
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd  
Back from the gate started the three, to  
whom  
From out thereunder came an ancient  
man,  
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my  
sons?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,  
Who leaving share in furrow come to see  
The glories of our King but these, my  
men,  
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)  
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come  
From Fairyland, and whether this be built  
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens,  
Or whether there be any city at all,  
Or all a vision and this music now  
Hath scared them both, but tell thou  
these the truth'

Then that old Seer made answer play-  
ing on him  
And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good  
ship sail  
Keel upward and mast downward in the  
heavens,  
And solid towers topsy-turvy in air  
and here is truth, but an it please thee  
not,  
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it  
me  
For truly as thou sayest, a fairy King  
And fairy Queens have built the city, son  
They came from out a sacred mountain  
cleft  
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in  
hand,

And built it to the music of then harps  
And as thou sayest it is enchanted, son,  
For there is nothing in it as it seems  
Saving the King, tho' some there be that  
hold

The King a shadow, and the city real  
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou  
pass

Beneath this archway, then wilt thou  
become

A thrall to his enchantments, for the King  
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame  
A man should not be bound by, yet the  
which

No man can keep, but, so thou dread to  
swear,

Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide  
Without, among the cattle of the field  
For an ye heard a music, like enow  
They are building still, seeing the city is  
built

To music, therefore never built at all,  
And therefore built for ever '

Gareth spake  
Anger'd, ' Old Master, reverence thine  
own beard

That looks as white as utter truth, and  
seems

Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall '  
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath  
been

To thee fair spoken ?'

But the Seer replied,  
' Know ye not then the Riddling of the  
Bards ?

" Confusion, and illusion, and relation,  
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion " ?

I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,  
And all that see thee, for thou art not who  
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou  
art

And now thou goest up to mock the King,  
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie '

Unmockingly the mocker ending here  
Turn'd to the right, and past along the  
plain,

Whom Gareth looking after said, ' My  
men,

Our one white lie sits like a little ghost  
Here on the threshold of our enterprise  
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I  
Well, we will make amends '

With all good cheer  
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with  
his twin

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces  
And stately, rich in emblem and the work  
Of ancient kings who did their days in  
stone,

Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at  
Arthur's court,

Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and every-  
where

At Arthur's ordinance, tipped with lessening  
perk

And pinnacle, and had made it spire to  
heaven

And ever and anon a knight would pass  
Outward, or inward to the hall his arms  
Clash'd, and the sound was good to  
Gareth's ear

And out of bowers and casement shyly  
glanced

Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of  
love,

And all about a healthful people slept  
As in the presence of a glorious king

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard  
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld  
Far over heads in that long vaulted hall  
The splendour of the presence of the  
King

Throned, and delivering doom — and  
look'd no more —

But felt his young heart hammering in his  
ears,

And thought, ' For this half shadow of a  
lie

The truthful King will doom me when I  
speak '

Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find  
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw not one  
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes  
Of those tall knights, that ranged about  
the throne,

Clear honour shining like the dewy stars

Of dawn, and faith in then great King,  
 with pure  
 Affection, and the light of victory,  
 And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain

Then came a widow crying to the King,  
 'A boon, Sir King' Thy father, Uther,  
 left

From my dead lord a field with violence  
 For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,  
 Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,  
 We yielded not, and then he left us of it  
 Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field'

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye  
 gold or field?'

To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my  
 lord,  
 The field was pleasant in my husband's  
 eye'

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field  
 again,  
 And thence the gold for Uther's use  
 thereof,  
 According to the years No boon is here,  
 But justice, so thy say be proven true  
 Accused, who from the wrongs his father  
 did  
 Would shape himself a right'

And while she past,  
 Came yet another widow crying to him,  
 'A boon, Sir King' Thine enemy, King,  
 am I

With thine own hand thou slewest my  
 dear lord,

A knight of Uther in the Britons' war,  
 When Lot and many another rose and  
 fought

Against thee, saying thou wert basely  
 born

I held with these, and loathe to ask thee  
 aught

Yet lo! my husband's brother had my  
 son

Thru'd in his castle, and hath starved  
 him dead

And standeth seized of that inheritance  
 Which thou that slewest the sire hast left  
 the son

So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,  
 Grant me some knight to do the battle  
 for me,  
 Kill the foul thief, and wick me for my  
 son'

Then strode a good knight forward,  
 crying to him,  
 'A boon, Sir King' I am her kinsman, I  
 Give me to right her wrong, and slay the  
 man'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and  
 cried,  
 'A boon, Sir King' ev'n that thou giant  
 her none,  
 This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full  
 hall—  
 None, or the wholesome boon of gyve  
 and gag'

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the  
 wrong'd  
 Thro' all our realm The woman loves  
 her lord  
 Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and  
 hates'  
 The kings of old had doom'd thee to the  
 flames,  
 Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee  
 dead,

And Uther slit thy tongue but get thee  
 hence—  
 Lest that rough humour of the kings of  
 old

Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,  
 Go likewise, lay him low and slay him  
 not,

But bring him here, that I may judge the  
 right,

According to the justice of the King  
 Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King  
 Who lived and died for men, the man  
 shall die'

Then came in hall the messengers of  
 Mark,

A name of evil savour in the land,  
 The Cornish king In either hand he  
 bore

What dazzled all, and shone far off as  
 shines

A field of charlock in the sudden sun  
Between two showers, a cloth of palest  
gold,  
Which down he laid before the throne,  
and knelt,  
Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,  
Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot,  
For having heard that Arthur of his grace  
Had made his goodly cousin, Tustiam,  
knight,  
And, for himself was of the greater state,  
Being a king, he trusted his liege lord  
Would yield him this large honour all the  
more,  
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of  
gold,  
In token of true heart and fealty

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to  
rend  
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth  
An oak-tree smoulder'd there 'The  
goodly knight'  
What 'shall the shield of Mark stand  
among these?'  
For, midway down the side of that long  
hall  
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,  
Some blazon'd, some but carved, and  
some blank,  
There ran a treble range of stony  
shields,—  
Rose, and high arching overbrow'd the  
hearth  
And under every shield a knight was  
named  
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall,  
When some good knight had done one  
noble deed,  
His arms were carved only, but if twain  
His arms were blazon'd also, but if none  
The shield was blank and bare without a  
sign  
Saving the name beneath, and Gueth  
saw  
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and  
bright,  
And Modred's blank as death, and  
Arthur cried  
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth

'More like are we to receive him of his  
crown  
Than make him knight because men call  
him king  
The kings we found, ye know we stry'd  
their hands  
From war among themselves, but left  
them kings,  
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,  
Truth speaking, brave, good livers, them  
we enroll'd  
Among us, and they sit within our hall  
But Mark hath turnish'd the great name  
of king,  
As Mark would sully the low state of churl  
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,  
Return, and meet, and hold him from  
our eyes,  
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,  
Silenced for ever—carven—a man of  
plots,  
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside am-  
bushings—  
No fault of thine let Kay the seneschal  
Look to thy wants, and send thee satis-  
fied—  
Accused, who strikes not lets the hand  
be seen'

And many another suppliant crying  
came  
With noise of ravage wrought by baron  
and man,  
And evermore a knight would ride away

Last, Gareth learning both hands heavily  
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his  
men,  
Approach'd between them toward the  
King, and ask'd,  
'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all  
ashamed),  
For see ye not how weak and hunger worn  
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to  
serve  
For meat and drink among thy kitchen  
knaves  
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my  
name  
Hereafter I will fight'



To him the King,  
 'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier  
 boon '  
 But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must  
 Kay,  
 The master of the meats and drinks, be  
 thine '

He rose and past, then Kay, a man  
 of mien  
 Wan sallow as the plant that feels itself  
 Root bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now '  
 This fellow hath broken from some Abbey,  
 where,  
 God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,  
 Ifowever that might chance ' but an he  
 wolk,  
 Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,  
 And sleeker shall he shine than any hog '

Then Lancelot standing new, 'Sir  
 Seneschal,  
 Slouth-bound thou knowest, and gray,  
 and all the hounds ,  
 A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost  
 not know  
 Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,  
 High nose, a nostril large and fine, and  
 hands  
 Large, full and fine '—Some young lad's  
 mystery—  
 But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy  
 Is noble natured ' Treat him with all  
 grace,  
 Lest he should come to shame thy judging  
 of him '

\* Then Kay, 'What murmur'st thou of  
 mystery ?  
 Think ye this fellow will poison the  
 King's dish ?  
 Nay, for he spake too fool like mystery '  
 Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd  
 For horse and armour full and fine,  
 forsooth '  
 Sir Fine face, Sir Fair-hands ? but see  
 thou to it  
 That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some  
 fine day  
 Undo thee not—and leave my name to me '

So Gareth all for glory underwent  
 The sooty yoke of kitchen vassalage ,  
 Ate with young lads his portion by the  
 door,  
 And couch'd at night with gummy kitchen-  
 knives

And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,  
 But Kay the seneschal who loved him not  
 Would hustle and harry him, and labour  
 him

Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set  
 To turn the broach, draw water, or hew  
 wood,

O! grosser tasks, and Gareth bow'd  
 himself

With all obedience to the King, and  
 wrought

All kind of service with a noble ease  
 That graced the lowliest act in doing it  
 And when the thralls had talk among  
 themselves,

And one would praise the love that link'd  
 the King

And Lancelot—how the King had saved  
 his life

In battle twice, and Lancelot once the  
 King's—

For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,  
 But Arthur mightiest on the battle field—  
 Gareth was glad O! if some other told,  
 How once the wandering forester at dawn,  
 Full over the blue tains and hazy seas,  
 On Caer Ebor's highest found the King,  
 A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,  
 'He passes to the Isle Avilion,  
 He passes and is heal'd and cannot die'—  
 Gareth was glad But if then talk were  
 foul,

Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,  
 O! carol some old roundelay, and so loud  
 That first they mock'd, but, after, rever-  
 enced him

O! Gareth telling some prodigious tale  
 Of knights, who siced a red life bubbling  
 way

How twenty folds of twisted dragon, held  
 All in a gap mouth'd circle his good mates  
 Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,  
 Churn'd, till Sir Kay, the seneschal,  
 would come

Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind  
Among dead leaves, and drive them all  
apart

O! when the thralls had spoit among  
themselves,

So there were any trial of mastery,  
He, by two yuds in casting bu or stone  
Was counted best, and if there chanced  
a joust,

So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,  
Would hurry thither, and when he saw  
the knights

Clash like the coming and retuning wave,  
And the spear spring, and good horse  
reel, the boy

Was half beyond himself for ecstasy

So for a month he wrought among the  
thralls,  
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good  
Queen,

Repentant of the word she made him  
swear,

And saddening in her childless castle, sent,  
Between the in crescent and de crescent  
moon,

Arms for her son, and loosed him from  
his vow

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of  
Lot

With whom he used to play at tourney  
once,

When both were children, and in lonely  
haunts

Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,  
And each at either dash from either end—  
Shame never made gul redder than Gareth  
joy

He laugh'd, he sprang 'Out of the  
smoke, at once

I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—  
These news be mine, none other's—nay,  
the King's—

Descend into the city ' whereon he sought  
The King alone, and found, and told him  
all

'I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in  
a tilt

For pastime, yet, he said it joust can I

Make me thy knight—in secret ' let my  
name

Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I  
spring

Like flame from ashes '

Here the King's calm eye  
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush,  
and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd  
him,

'Son, the good mother let me know thee  
here,

And sent her wish that I would yield thee  
thine

Make thee my knight? my knights are  
sworn to vows

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,  
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,  
And uttermost obedience to the King '

Then Gareth, lightly springing from  
his knees,

'My King, for hardihood I can promise  
thee

For uttermost obedience make demand  
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,  
No mellow master of the meats and  
drinks '

And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,  
But love I shall, God willing '

And the King—  
'Make thee my knight in secret? yea,  
but he,

Our noblest brother, and our truest man,  
And one with me in all, he needs must  
know '

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let  
Lancelot know,  
Thy noblest and thy truest '

And the King—  
'But wherefore would ye men should  
wonder at you?

Nay, rather for the sake of me, than  
King,

And the deed's sake my knighthood do  
the deed,

Than to be noised of '

Merrily Gareth ask'd,  
'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking  
of it?'

Let be my name until I make my name!  
My deeds will speak it is but for a day!  
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm  
Smiled the great King, and half unwillingly

Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to  
him

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,  
'I have given him the first quest he is  
not proven

Look therefore when he calls for this in  
hall,

Thou get to horse and follow him far away  
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see  
Far as thou mayest, he be not taken nor  
slain'

Then that same day there past into the  
hall

A damsel of high lineage, and a brow  
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple  
blossom,

Hawk eyes, and lightly was her slender  
nose

Tip tilted like the petal of a flower,  
She into hall past with her page and cried,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe  
without,

See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset  
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower  
The Lord for half a league Why sit ye  
there?

Rest would I not, Sir King, and I were  
king,

Till even the lonest hold were all as free  
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar  
cloth

From that best blood it is a sin to spill'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I not  
mune

Rest so my knighthood keep the vows  
they swore,

The wastest moorland of our realm shall  
be

Safe, damsel, as the center of this hall  
What is thy name? thy need?'

'My name?' she said—  
'Lynette my name, noble, my need, a  
knight

To combat for my sister, Lyonors,  
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,  
And comely, yea, and comelier than my  
self

She lives in Castle Perilous a niver  
Runs in three loops about her living  
place,

And o'er it are three passings, and three  
knights

Defend the passings, biethien, and a  
fourth

And of that four the mightiest, holds her  
stay'd

In her own castle, and so besieges her  
To break her will, and make her wed with  
him

And but delays his purport till thou send  
To do the battle with him, thy chief man  
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,  
Then wed, with glory but she will not  
wed

Save whom she loveth, or a holy life  
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,  
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to  
crush

All wrongers of the Realm But say, these  
four,

Who be they? What the fashion of the  
men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,  
The fashion of that old knight errantry  
Who ride abroad and do but what they  
will,

Courteous or bestial from the moment,  
such

As have nor law nor king, and three of  
these

Proud in their fantasy call themselves the  
Day,

Morning-Star, and Noon Sun, and Even  
ing Star,

Being strong fools, and never a whit more  
wise

The fourth, who always with aim'd in  
black,

A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.  
 He names himself the Night and oftener  
     Death,  
 And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,  
 And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,  
 To show that who may slay or scape the  
     three  
 Slain by himself shall enter endless night.  
 And all these four befools, but mighty men,  
 And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he  
     rose,  
 A head with kindling eyes above the  
     throng,  
 'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—  
     for he mark'd  
 Kay near him groaning like a wounded  
     bull—  
 'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-  
     knave am I,  
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks  
     am I,  
 And I can topple over a hundred such.  
 Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing  
     at him,  
 Brought down a momentary brow.  
     'Rough, sudden,  
 And pardonable, worthy to be knight—  
 Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame,  
     pride, wrath  
 Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,  
 'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief  
     knight,  
 And thou hast given me but a kitchen-  
     knave.'  
 Then ere a man in hall could stay her,  
     turn'd,  
 Fled down the lane of access to the King,  
 Took horse, descended the slope street,  
     and past  
 The weird white gate, and paused without,  
     beside  
 The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-  
     knave.'

Now two great entries open'd from the  
     hall,  
 At one end one, that gave upon a range

Of level pavement where the King would  
     pace  
 At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;  
 And down from this a lordly stairway  
     sloped  
 Till lost in blowing trees and tops of  
     towers;  
 And out by this main doorway past the  
     King.  
 But one was counter to the hearth, and  
     rose  
 High that the highest-crested helm could  
     ride  
 Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry  
     fled  
 The damsel in her wrath, and on to this  
 Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the  
     door  
 King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a  
     town,  
 A warhorse of the best, and near it stood  
 The two that out of north had follow'd  
     him:  
 This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that  
     held  
 The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth  
     loosed  
 A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to  
     heel,  
 A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,  
 And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,  
 That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and  
     flash'd as those  
 Dull-coated things, that making slide  
     apart  
 Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there  
     burns  
 A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.  
 So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.  
 Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the  
     shield  
 And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of  
     grain  
 Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and  
     tip  
 With trenchant steel, around him slowly  
     prest  
 The people, while from out of kitchen came  
 The thralls in throng, and seeing who had  
     work'd

Lustier than any, and whom they could  
but love,  
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and  
cried,  
God bless the King, and all his fellow  
ship !'  
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode  
Down the slope street, and past without  
the gate

So Gareth past with joy, but as the cur  
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his  
cause  
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being  
named,  
His owner, but remembers all, and growls  
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door  
Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used  
To harry and hustle

'Bound upon a quest  
With hoise and arms—the King hath past  
his time—  
My scullion knave ! Thalls to your work  
again,  
For in your fire be low ye kindle mine !  
Will there be dawn in West and eve in  
East ?  
Begone !—my knave !—belike and like  
enow  
Some old head blow not heeded in his  
youth  
So shook his wits they wander in his  
prime—  
Crazed ! How the villain lifted up his  
voice,  
Nor shamed to brawl himself a kitchen  
knave  
Tut he was tame and meek enow with  
me,  
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing  
Well—I will aften my loud knave, and  
lain  
Whether he know me for his master yet  
Out of the smoke he came, and so my  
lance  
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the  
mire—  
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,  
Into the smoke again'

But Lancelot said,  
'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the  
King,  
For that did never he whereon ye rail,  
But ever meekly served the King in thee?  
Abide take counsel, for this lad is great  
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and  
sword'  
'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are  
overfine  
To mar stout knaves with foolish counte-  
sies'  
Then mounted, on this' silent faces rode  
Down the slope city, and out beyond the  
gate

But by the field of tourney lingering yet  
Mutter'd the damsel, 'Wherefore did the  
King  
Scorn me ? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt,  
at least  
He might have yielded to me one of those  
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,  
Rather than—O sweet heaven ! O fie  
upon him—  
His kitchen knave'

To whom Sir Gareth drew  
(And there were none but few goodlier  
than he)  
Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine  
Lead, and I follow' She thereat, as one  
That smells a foul flesh'd againe in the  
holt,  
And deems it caution of some woodland  
thing,  
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose  
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,  
'Hence !  
Avoid, thou smelliest all of kitchen-grease  
And look who comes behind,' for there  
was Kay  
'Knowest thou not me ? thy master ? I  
am Kay  
We lack thee by the health'

And Gareth to him,  
'Master no more ! too well I know thee,  
ay—  
The most ungente knight in Arthur's  
hall'

'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they  
shock'd, and Kay  
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,  
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she  
fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly  
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse  
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,  
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou, scullion, in my  
fellowship?  
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the  
more  
Or love thee better, that by some device  
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,  
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy  
master—thou!—  
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—  
to me  
Thou smell'st all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently,  
'say  
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,  
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,  
Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?  
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he  
talks!  
The listening rogue hath caught the man-  
ner of it.  
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with,  
knave,  
And then by such a one that thou for all  
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt  
Shalt not once dare to look him in the  
face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile  
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd  
again  
Down the long avenues of a boundless  
wood,  
And Gareth following was again beknaved.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the  
only way  
Where Arthur's men are set along the  
wood;

The wood is nigh as full of thieves as  
leaves:

If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,  
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of  
thine?

Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the  
only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong  
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;  
Then after one long slope was mounted,  
saw,

Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand  
pines

A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink  
To westward—in the deeps whereof a  
mere,

Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,  
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and  
shouts

Ascended, and there brake a servingman  
Flying from out of the black wood, and  
crying,

'They have bound my lord to cast him in  
the mere.'

Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the  
wrong'd,

But straitlier bound am I to bide with  
thee.'

And when the damsel spake contempt-  
uously,

'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,  
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the  
pines

He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd  
nigh the mere,

And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and  
reed,

Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,  
A stone about his neck to drown him  
in it.

Three with good blows he quieted, but  
three

Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed  
the stone

From off his neck, then in the mere beside  
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.

Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free  
feet

Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff  
 rogues  
 Had wreak'd themselves on me ; good  
 cause is theirs  
 To hate me, for my wont hath ever been  
 To catch my thief, and then like vermin  
 here  
 Drown him, and with a stone about his  
 neck ;  
 And under this wan water many of them  
 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,  
 And rise, and flickering in a grimly light  
 Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have  
 saved a life  
 Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this  
 wood.  
 And fain would I reward thee worship-  
 fully.  
 What guerdon will ye ?'

Gareth sharply spake,  
 'None ! for the deed's sake have I done  
 the deed,  
 In uttermost obedience to the King.  
 But wilt thou yield this damsel harbour-  
 age ?'

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well  
 believe  
 You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh  
 Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth,  
 And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-  
 knave !—  
 But deem not I accept thee aught the  
 more,  
 Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit  
 Down on a rout of craven foresters.  
 A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.  
 Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen  
 still.  
 But an this lord will yield us harbourage,  
 Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the  
 wood,  
 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,  
 His towers where that day a feast had  
 been  
 Held in high hall, and many a viand left,  
 And many a costly cate, received the  
 three.

And there they placed a peacock in his  
 pride  
 Before the damsel, and the Baron set  
 Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much dis-  
 courtesy,  
 Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.  
 Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's  
 hall,  
 And pray'd the King would grant me  
 Lancelot  
 To fight the brotherhood of Day and  
 Night—

The last a monster unsubduable  
 Of any save of him for whom I call'd—  
 Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-  
 knave,  
 "The quest is mine ; thy kitchen-knave  
 am I,  
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks  
 am I."

Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,  
 "Go therefore," and so gives the quest  
 to him—  
 Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine  
 Than ride abroad redressing women's  
 wrong,  
 Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed,  
 the lord  
 Now look'd at one and now at other, left  
 The damsel by the peacock in his pride,  
 And, seating Gareth at another board,  
 Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-  
 knave, or not,  
 Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,  
 And whether she be mad, or else the  
 King,  
 Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,  
 I ask not : but thou striketh a strong  
 stroke,  
 For strong thou art and goodly there-  
 withal,  
 And saver of my life ; and therefore now,  
 For here be mighty men to joust with,  
 weigh

Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel  
back  
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King  
Thy pardon, I but speak for thine avail,  
The savor of my life,

And Gareth said,  
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,  
Despite of Day and Night and Death and  
Hell,'

So when, next morn, the lord whose  
life he saved  
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on  
their way  
And left them with God speed, Sir Gareth  
spoke,  
'Lead, and I follow' Haughtily she  
replied,

'I fly no more I allow thee for an  
hour  
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,  
In time of flood Nay, furthermore,  
methinks  
Some ruth is mine for thee Back wilt  
thou, fool?  
For hard by here is one will overthrow  
And slay thee then will I to count again,  
And shame the King for only yielding  
me  
My champion from the ashes of his hearth'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously,  
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed  
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt  
find  
My fortunes all as full as hers who lay  
Among the ashes and wedded the King's  
son'

Then to the shore of one of those long  
loops  
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they  
came  
Rough thicketed were the banks and  
steep, the stream  
Full, narrow, this a budge of single arc  
look at a leap, and on the further side  
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold

In streaks and rays, and all Lent lily in  
hue,  
Save that the dome was purple, and above,  
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering  
And therefore the lawless warrior paced  
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this  
he,  
The champion thou hast brought from  
Arthur's hall?  
For whom we let thee pass' 'Nay, nay,'  
she said,  
'Sir Morning Star The King in utter  
scorn  
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee  
here  
His kitchen-knave and look thou to  
thyself  
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,  
And slay thee unarm'd he is not knight  
but I have'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the  
Dawn,  
And servants of the Morning Star, ap-  
proach,  
Arm me,' from out the silken curtain folds  
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair  
girls  
In gilt and rosy raiment came their feet  
In dewy grasses glisten'd, and the hair  
All over glauced with dewdrop or with  
gem  
Like sparkles in the stone Adventure  
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave  
a shield  
Blue also, and thereon the morning star  
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,  
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was  
brought,  
Glorious, and in the stream beneath him  
shone  
Immingled with Heaven's azure wav-  
ingly,  
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,  
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star

Then she that watch'd him, 'Wherefore  
stare ye so?  
Thou shakest in thy fear there yet is  
time



Flee down the valley before he get to  
horse

Who will cry shame? Thou art not  
knight but knave'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave  
or knight,  
Far liefer had I fight a score of times  
Than hear thee so missay me and revile  
Fair words were best for him who fights  
for thee,

But truly foul we better, for they send  
That strength of anger thro' mine arms,  
I know

That I shall overthrow him'

And he that bore  
The steed, being mounted, cried from o'er  
the bridge,

'A kitchen knave, and sent in scorn of me'  
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with  
scorn

For this were shame to do him further  
wrong

Thou set him on his feet, and take his  
horse

And arms, and so return him to the  
King

Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly,  
knave

Avoid for it beseemeth not a knave  
To ride with such a lady'

'Dog, thou liest  
I sprung from loftier lineage than thine  
own'

He spake, and all at fiery speed the two  
Shook'd on the central bridge, and either  
spear

Bent but not brake, and either knight at  
once,

Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult  
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,  
Fell, as if dead, but quickly rose and  
drew,

And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his  
brand

He drove his enemy backward down the  
bridge,

The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken,  
kitchen knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven, but one  
stroke

Laid him that clove it grovelling on the  
ground

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my  
life I yield'

And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me  
Good—I accord it easily as a grace'

She reddening, 'Insolent scullion I of  
thee?

I bound to thee for any favour ask'd'

'Then shall he die' And Gareth there  
unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,  
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay

One nobler than thyself' 'Damsel, thy  
charge

Is an abounding pleasure to me Knight,  
Thy life is thine at her command Arise  
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say  
His kitchen knave hath sent thee See  
thou crave

His pardon for thy breaking of his laws  
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee  
Thy shield is mine—farewell, and,  
damsel, thou,

Lead, and I follow'

And fast away she fled  
Then when he came upon her, spake,

'Methought,  
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on  
the bridge

The savour of thy kitchen came upon me  
A little further but the wind hath  
changed

Iscent it twenty-fold' And then she sang,  
"O morning star" (not that tall felon there  
Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness

Or some device, hast foully overthrown),  
"O morning star that smilest in the blue,  
O star, my morning dream hath proven  
true,

Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled  
on me"

'But thou begone, take counsel, and  
away,

For hard by here is one that guards a  
ford—

The second brother in then fool's puaule—  
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot  
Care not for shame thou art not knight  
but knave'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laugh-  
ingly,  
'Parables? Hear a parable of the knave  
When I was kitchen knave among the rest  
Fiece was the hearth, and one of my  
co mites  
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his  
coat,  
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle  
with it  
And such a coat art thou, and thee the  
King  
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,  
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight  
or knave—  
The knave that doth thee service as full  
knight  
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight  
Toward thy sister's freeing'

'Ay, Sir Knave'  
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a  
knight,  
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more'

'Fur damsel, you should worship me  
the more,  
That, being but knave, I throw thine  
enemies'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet  
thy match'

So when they touch'd the second river  
loop,  
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail  
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday  
Sun  
Beyond a raging shallow As if the flower,  
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,  
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the  
fiece shield,  
All sun, and Gareth's eyes had flying  
blots  
Before them when he turn'd from watch-  
ing him

He from beyond the roaring shallow  
roar'd,  
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches  
here?'  
And she athwart the shallow shall'd again,  
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's  
hall  
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath  
his arms'  
'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizzing up a  
red  
And ciphers face of rounded foolishness,  
Push'd horse across the foamings of the  
ford,  
Whom Gareth met midstream no room  
was there  
For lance or tourney skill four strokes  
they struck  
With sword, and these were mighty, the  
new knight  
Had seen he might be shamed, but as the  
Sun  
Heaved up a ponderous arm to stifle the  
fifth,  
The hoof of his horse split in the stream,  
the stream  
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the  
ford,  
So drew him home, but he that fought  
no more,  
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,  
Yielded, and Gareth sent him to the  
King

'Myself when I return will plead for thee'  
'I lead, and I follow' Quietly she led  
'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed  
again?'

'Nay, not a point nor art thou victor  
here  
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford,  
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I  
saw it

"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom  
thou, Sir Knave,  
Hast overthrown thine own unhappiness),  
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or  
pain,

O moon, that layest all to sleep again,  
Shine sweetly twice my love hath smiled  
on me "

'What knowest thou of lovesong or of  
love ?

Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly  
born,

Thou hast a pleasant presence Yea,  
perchance,—

"O dewy flowers that open to the  
sun,

O dewy flowers that close when day is  
done,

Blow sweetly twice my love hath smiled  
on me "

'What knowest thou of flowers, except,  
belike,

To garnish meats with ? hath not our  
good King

Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchen  
dom,

A foolish love for flowers ? what stick ye  
round

The pasty ? wherewithal deck the boy's  
head ?

Flowers ? nay, the boy hath rosemaiden  
and boy

"O buds, that warble to the morning  
sky,

O buds that warble as the day goes by,  
Sing sweetly twice my love hath smiled  
on me "

'What knowest thou of buds, lark,  
mavis, meile,

Linnat ? what dream ye when they utter  
forth

May-music growing with the growing  
light,

Their sweet sun worship ? these be for the  
sunny

(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,  
Larding and basting See thou have not  
now

Landed thy last, except thou turn and fly  
There stands the third fool of their

illegoy '

For there beyond a bridge of tieble  
bow,

All in a rose-red from the west, and all  
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad  
Deep dimpled current underneath, the  
knight,

That named himself the Star of Evening,  
stood

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the  
madman there

Naked in open dayshine ?' 'Nay,' she  
cried,

'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins  
That fit him like his own, and so ye cleave  
His armour off him, these will turn the  
blade '

Then the third brother shouted o'er the  
bridge,

'O brother star, why shine ye here so low ?  
Thy ward is higher up but have ye slain  
The damsel's champion ?' and the damsel  
cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's  
heaven

With all disaster unto thine and thee '  
For both thy younger brethren have gone  
down

Before this youth, and so wilt thou, Sir  
Star,

Art thou not old ?'

Old, damsel, old and hard,  
Old, with the might and breath of twenty  
boys '

Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in  
brag '

But that same strength which threw the  
Morning Star

Can throw the Evening '

Then that other blew  
A hard and deadly note upon the horn  
'Approach and aim me !' With slow  
steps from out

An old storm beaten, russet, many stained  
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,  
And aimed him in old arms, and brought  
a helm

With but a drying evergreen for crest,  
And gave a shield whereon the Star of  
Even

Half tarnish'd and half bright, his emblem, shone

But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle bow,  
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge,  
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,  
There met him drawn, and overthrew him  
again,

But up like fire he started and was oft  
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his  
knees,

So many a time he vaulted up again.  
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great  
heart,

Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,  
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one  
That all in later, sadder age begins  
To war against ill uses of a life,  
But these from all his life arise, and cry,  
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not  
put us down'

He half despairs, so Gareth seem'd to  
strike

Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the  
while,

'Well done, knave knight, well stricken,  
O good knight knave—

O knave, as noble as any of all the  
knights—

Shame me not, shame me not I have  
prophesied—

Strike, thou art worthy of the Table  
Round—

His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd  
skin—

Strike—strike—the wind will never  
change again'

And Gareth hearing ever stronger smote,  
And hew'd great pieces of his armour off  
him,

But lash'd in vain against the harden'd  
skin,

And could not wholly bring him under,  
more

Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge  
on ridge,

The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and  
springs

For ever, till at length Sir Gareth's brand  
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the  
hill

'I have thee now,' but forth that other  
sprang,

And, all unknighlike, wuthed his way  
arms

Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,  
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost  
Crest, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the  
bridge

Down to the river, sink or swim, and  
cried,

'Lead, and I follow'

But the damsel said,  
'I lead no longer, ride thou at my side  
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-  
knaves

"O trefoil, sprukling on the runy  
plum,

O rainbow with three colours after rain,  
Shine sweetly thence my love hath smiled  
on me"

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had  
added—Knight,

But that I heard thee call thyself a  
knave,—

Shamed me I that I so rebuked, reviled,  
Missaid thee, noble I am, and thought  
the King

Sco'n'd me and mine, and now thy  
pardon, friend,

For thou hast ever answer'd countously,  
And wholly bold thou art, and meek  
withal

As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,  
Hast mazed my wit I marvel what thou  
art

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to  
blame,

Saying that you mistrusted our good King  
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking,  
one

Not fit to cope your quest You said  
your say,

Mine answer was my deed Good sooth'  
—I hold

He scarce is knight, yea but half-man,  
 nor meet  
 To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets  
 His heart be stir'd with any foolish heat  
 At any gentle damsel's waywardness  
 Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings  
 fought for me  
 And seeing now thy words are fair,  
 methinks  
 There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his  
 great self,  
 Hath force to quell me!

Nigh upon that hour  
 When the lone hermit forgets his melancholy,  
 Lets down his other leg, and stretching,  
 dreams  
 Of goodly supper in the distant pool,  
 Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at  
 him,  
 And told him of a cavern hard at hand,  
 Where bread and baken meats and good  
 red wine  
 Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors  
 Had sent her coming champion, waited  
 him

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein  
 Were slabs of rock with figures, knights  
 on horse  
 Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning  
 hues  
 'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once  
 was here,  
 Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the  
 rock  
 The way of Time against the soul of man  
 And yon four fools have suck'd then alle-  
 gory  
 From these damp walls, and taken but  
 the form  
 Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt  
 and read—  
 In letters like to those the vexillary  
 Hath left ciag-carven o'er the streaming  
 Gelt—

'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MLRIDILS'—  
 'HESPERUS'—  
 'NOX'—'MORS,' beneath five figures,  
 armed men,

III

Slab after slab, their faces forward all,  
 And running down the Soul, a Shape that  
 fled  
 With broken wings, torn raiment and  
 loose hair,  
 For help and shelter to the hermit's cave  
 'Follow the faces, and we find it! Look,  
 Who comes behind?'

For one—delay'd at first  
 Thio' helping back the dislocated Kay  
 To Camelot, then by what thereafter  
 chanced,  
 The damsel's headlong error thro' the  
 wood—  
 Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-  
 loops—  
 His blue shield lions cover'd—softly diew  
 Behind the twain, and when he saw the  
 star  
 Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him,  
 cried,  
 'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my  
 friend'  
 And Gareth cying pick'd against the cly,  
 But when they closed—in a moment—at  
 one touch  
 Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the  
 world—  
 Went sliding down so easily, and fell,  
 That when he found the grass within his  
 hands  
 He laugh'd, the laughter join'd upon  
 Lynette  
 Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and  
 overthrown,  
 And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,  
 Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast  
 in vain?'  
 'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son  
 Of old King Lot and good Queen Bell  
 cent,  
 And victor of the bridges and the ford,  
 And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by  
 whom  
 I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—  
 Device and sorcery and unhappiness—  
 Out, sword, we are thrown!' And  
 Lancelot answer'd, 'Prince,  
 O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness

I,

Of one who came to help thee, not to  
harm,  
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee  
whole,  
As on the day when Arthur knighted him '

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot '—  
thine the hand  
That threw me? An some chance to mu  
the boust  
Thy brethren of thee make—which could  
not chance—  
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,  
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot  
—thou ' '

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lance  
lot,  
Why came ye not, when call'd? and  
wherefore now  
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my  
knave,  
Who being still rebuked, would answer  
still  
Courteous as any knight—but now, if  
knight,  
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd  
and trick'd,  
And only wondering wherefore play'd  
upon  
And doubtful whether I and mine be  
scoun'd  
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's  
hall,  
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave,  
punce and fool,  
I hate thee and for ever '

And Lancelot said,  
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth ' knight  
art thou  
To the King's best wish O damsel, be  
you wise  
To call him shamed, who is but over-  
thrown?  
Thrown have I been, not once, but many  
a time  
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,  
And overthrower from being overthrown  
With sword we have not striven, and  
thy good horse

And thou art weary, yet not less I felt  
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance  
of thine  
Well hast thou done, for all the stream  
is freed,  
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his  
foe,  
And when reviled, hast answer'd graciu-  
ously,  
And makest mery when overthrown  
Prince, Knight,  
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our  
Table Round ' '

And then when turning to Lynette he  
told  
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,  
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being  
fool'd  
Of others, is to fool one's self A cave,  
Sir Lancelot, is hid by, with meats and  
drinks  
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire  
But all about it flies a honeysuckle  
Seek, till we find And when they  
sought and found,  
Sir Gareth drink and ate, and all his life  
Past into sleep, on whom the maiden  
gazed  
'Sound sleep be thine ' sound cause to  
sleep hast thou  
Wake lusty ' Seem I not as tender to  
him  
As my mother? Ay, but such a one  
As all day long hath rated at her child,  
And vex his day, but blesses him asleep—  
Good lord, how sweetly smells the  
honeysuckle  
In the hush'd night, as if the world were  
one  
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness '  
O Lancelot, Lancelot '—and she clasp'd  
her hands—  
'Full mery am I to find my goodly knight  
Is knight and noble See now, sworn  
have I,  
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,  
I o bring thee back to do the battle with  
him  
Thus art thou goest, he will fight thee first,

Who doubts thee victor? so will my  
knight knave  
Miss the full flower of this accomplish-  
ment'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you  
name,  
May know my shield Let Gareth, an  
he will,  
Change his for mine, and take my charger,  
flesh,  
Not to be spun'd, loving the battle as  
well  
As he that rides him' 'Lancelot-like,'  
she said,  
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in  
all'

And Gareth, waking, fiercely clutch'd  
the shield,  
'Rampelance-splintering lions, on whom  
all spears  
Are rotten sticks 'ye seem apte to rot'  
Yea, ramp and rot at leaving of your  
lord'—  
'Cue not, good beasts, so will I cue for  
you  
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these  
Streams virtue—fire—tho' one that will  
not shame  
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield  
Hence let us go'

Silent the silent field  
They traversed Arthur's hup tho'  
summer wan,  
In counter motion to the clouds, allured  
The glance of Gareth dicaming on his  
liege  
A star shot 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe  
falls'

An owl whoopt 'Hark the victor peal  
ing there'  
Suddenly she that rode upon his left  
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent  
him, crying,  
'Yield, yield him this again 'tis he must  
fight  
I curse the tongue that all tho' yesterday  
Reveled thee, and hath wrought on  
Lancelot now

To lend thee horse and shield wonders  
ye have done,  
Miracles ye cannot here is glory now  
In having flung the three I see thee  
maim'd,  
Mangled I swear thou canst not fling  
the fourth'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all  
ye know  
You cannot scare me, nor rough face, or  
voice,  
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery  
Appal me from the quest'

'Nay, Prince,' she cried,  
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,  
Seeing he never rides abroad by day,  
But watch'd him have I like a phantom  
pass  
Chilling the night nor have I heard the  
voice  
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page  
Who came and went, and still reported  
him  
As closing in himself the strength of ten,  
And when his anger ture him, massacring  
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft  
baby'  
Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant  
flesh  
Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot  
first,  
The quest is Lancelot's gave him back  
the shield'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for  
this,  
Belike he wins it as the better man  
Thus—and not else'

But Lancelot on him urged  
All the devisings of their chivalry  
When one might meet a mightier than  
himself  
How best to manage horse, lance, sword  
and shield,  
And so fill up the gap where force might  
fail  
With skill and fineness Instant were  
his words

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules I know  
but one—  
To dash against mine enemy and to win  
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the  
joust,  
And seen thy way ' 'Heaven help thee,'  
sigh'd Lynette

Then for a space, and under cloud that  
grew  
To thunder gloom palling all stars, they  
rode  
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,  
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd,  
'There'  
And all the three were silent seeing,  
pitch'd  
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,  
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak  
Sunder the glooming crimson on the  
marge,  
Black, with black banner, and a long  
black horn  
Beside it hanging, which Sir Gareth  
graspt,  
And so, before the two could hinder him,  
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the  
horn  
Echo'd the walls, a light twinkled, anon  
Came lights and lights, and once again  
he blew,  
Whereon were hollow trampings up and  
down  
And muffled voices heard, and shadows  
past,  
Till high above him, circled with her  
maids,  
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,  
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him  
White hands, and courtesy, but when  
the Prince  
Three times had blown—after long hush  
—at last—  
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,  
Thro' those black foldings, that which  
housed therein  
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack  
arms,  
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs  
of Death,

And crown'd with fleshless laughter—  
some ten steps—  
In the half light—thro' the dim dawn—  
advanced  
The monster, and then paused, and spake  
no word

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,  
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength  
of ten,  
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God  
hath given,  
But must, to make the terror of thee more,  
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries  
Of that which Life hath done with, and  
the clod,  
Less dull than thou, will hide with  
mantling flowers  
As if for pity?' But he spake no word,  
Which set the horror higher a maiden  
swoon'd,  
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and  
wept,  
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and  
Death,  
Sir Gareth's head pickled beneath his  
helmet,  
And even Sir Lancelot thro' his wound  
blood felt  
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were  
aghast

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely  
neigh'd,  
And Death's dark war horse bounded  
forward with him  
Then those that did not blink the terror,  
saw  
That Death was cast to ground, and  
slowly rose  
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the  
skull  
Half fell to right and half to left and lay  
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the  
helmet  
As throughly as the skull, and out from  
this  
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy  
Fresh as a flower new born, and crying,  
'Knight,



Slay me not my three biethren bad me  
do it,

To make a horror all about the house,  
And stay the world from Lady Lyonois  
They never dream'd the passes would be  
past'

Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one  
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair  
child,

What madness made thee challenge the  
chief knight

Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad  
me do it

They hate the King, and Lancelot, the  
King's friend,

They hoped to slay him somewhere on  
the stream,

They never dream'd the passes could be  
past'

Then sprang the happier day from  
underground,

And Lady Lyonois and her house, with  
dance

And revel and song, made merry over  
Death,

As being after all their foolish fears  
And horrors only proven a blooming boy  
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the  
quest

And he that told the tale in older times  
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonois,  
But he, that told it later, says Lynette

## GERAINT AND ENID

## I

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's  
court,

A tributary pince of Devon, one  
Of that great Order of the Table Round,  
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,  
And loved her, as he loved the light of  
Heaven

And as the light of Heaven varies, now  
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night  
With moon and trembling stars, so loved  
Geraint

To make her beauty vary day by day

In crimsons and in purples and in gems  
And Enid, but to please her husband's

eye,  
Who first had found and loved her in a  
state

Of broken fortunes, daily fionted him  
In some fresh splendour, and the Queen  
herself,

Grateful to Prince Geraint for service  
done,

Loved her, and often with her own white  
hands

Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,  
Next after her own self, in all the court  
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true  
heart

Adored her, as the stateliest and the best  
And loveliest of all women upon earth  
And seeing them so tender and so close,  
Long in their common love rejoiced  
Geraint

But when a rumour rose about the Queen,  
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,  
Tho' yet there lived no proof, not yet  
was heard

The world's loud whisper breaking into  
storm,

Not less Geraint believed it, and there fell  
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,  
Tho' that great tenderness for Guinevere,  
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint  
In nature wherefore going to the King,  
He made this pretext, that his pinedom  
lay

Close on the borders of a territory,  
Wherein were bandit ears, and crafty  
knights,

Assassins, and all flyers from the hand  
Of justice, and whatever loathes a law  
And therefore, till the King himself  
should please

To cleanse this common sewer of all his  
realm,

He craved a fair permission to depart,  
And there defend his marches, and the  
King

Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,  
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,  
And fifty knights rode with them, to the  
shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own  
land,

Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife  
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,  
He compass'd her with sweet observances  
And worship, never leaving her, and grew  
Forgetful of his promise to the King,  
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,  
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,  
Forgetful of his glory and his name,  
Forgetful of his principedom and its cares  
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her  
And by and by the people, when they met  
In twos and threes, of fuller companies,  
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him  
As of a prince whose manhood was all  
gone,

And molten down in mere uxoriousness  
And thus she gather'd from the people's  
eyes

This too the women who attend her heard,  
To please her, dwelling on his boundless  
love,

Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the  
more

And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,  
But could not out of bashful delicacy,  
While he that watch'd her sadden, was  
the more

Suspicious that her nature had turned

At last, it chanced that on a summer  
morn

(They sleeping each by either) the new sun  
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the  
room,

And heated the strong warrior in his  
dreams,

Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,  
And bared the knotted column of his  
throat,

The massive square of his heroic breast,  
And aims on which the standing muscle  
sloped,

As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,  
Running too vehemently to break upon it  
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,  
Admiring him, and thought within herself,  
Was ever man so grandly made as he?  
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk

And accusation of uxoriousness  
Across her mind, and bowing over him,  
Low to her own heart piteously she said

'O noble heart and all puissant arms,  
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men  
Reproach you, saying all your force is  
gone?

I am the cause, because I dare not speak  
And tell him what I think and what they  
say

And yet I hate that he should linger here,  
I cannot love my lord and not his name  
For he has had I gird his harness on him,  
And ride with him to battle and stand by,  
And watch his mighty hand striking  
great blows

At castles and at wrongers of the world  
For better were I laid in the dark earth,  
Not hearing any more his noble voice,  
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,  
And darken'd from the high light in his  
eyes,

Than that my lord thro' me should suffer  
shame

Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,  
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,  
Or maybe pierced to death before mine  
eyes,

And yet not dare to tell him what I think,  
And how men shun him, saying all his force  
Is melted into mere effeminacy?

O me, I fear that I am no true wife'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,  
And the strong passion in her made her  
weep

True tears upon his broad and naked  
breast,

And these awoke him, and by great mis-  
chance

He heard but fragments of her later words,  
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife  
And then he thought, 'In spite of all my  
care,

For all my pains, poor man, for all my  
pains,

She is not faithful to me, and I see her  
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's  
hall'

Then tho' he loved and revered her  
too much

To dream she could be guilty of foul act,  
Right tho' his manful breast danted the  
pang

That makes a man, in the sweet face of her  
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable  
At this he huld his huge limbs out of  
bed,

And shook his drowsy squire awake and  
cried,

'My charger and her palfrey,' then to her,  
'I will ride forth into the wilderness,  
For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,  
I have not fall'n so low as some would  
wish

And thou, put on thy worst and meanest  
dress

And ride with me' And Enid ask'd,  
amazed,

'If Enid eirs, let Enid learn her fault'  
But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey'  
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,  
A faded mantle and a faded veil,  
And moving toward a cedar cabinet,  
Wherein she kept them folded reverently  
With sprigs of summer laid between the  
folds,

She took them, and array'd herself therein,  
Remembering when first he came on her  
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her  
in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,  
And all his journey to her, as himself  
Hav' told her, and then coming to the  
court

" For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before  
Held court at old Caelemon upon Usk  
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,  
Before him came a forester of Deirn,  
Wet from the woods, with notice of a brut  
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,  
First seen that day these things he told  
the King

Then the good King gave order to let blow  
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn  
And when the Queen petition'd for his  
leave

To see the hunt, allow'd it easily

So with the morning all the court were  
gone

But Guinevere lay late into the morn,  
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her  
love

For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt,  
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,  
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd  
the wood,

There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd  
Waiting to hear the hounds, but heard  
instead

A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince  
Geraint,

Late also, wearing neither hunting dress  
Nor weapon, save a golden hilted brand,  
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow  
ford

Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll  
A purple scarf, at either end whereof

There swung an apple of the purest gold,  
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up  
To join them, glancing like a dragon fly  
In summer suit and silks of holiday

Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,  
Sweetly and stately, and with all grace  
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd  
him

'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later  
than we!'

'Yes, noble Queen, he answer'd, 'and  
so late

That I but come like you to see the  
hunt,

Not join it' 'Therefore wait with me,'  
she said,

'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,  
There is good chance that we shall hear  
the hounds

Here often they break covert at our feet'

And while they listen'd for the distant  
hunt,

And chiefly for the baying of Cerrill,  
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth,  
there rode

Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf,  
Whereof the dwarf lagged latest, and the  
knight

Had vizon up, and show'd a youthful face,

Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments  
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face  
In the King's hall, desired his name, and sent

Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf,  
Who being vicious, old and irritable,  
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,  
Made answer sharply that she should not know

'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said  
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried  
the dwarf,

'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him,'

And when she put her horse toward the knight,

Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd

Indignant to the Queen, whereat Geraint  
Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'  
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,

Who answer'd as before, and when the Prince

Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,

Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek

The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,  
Dyeing it, and his quick, instinctive hand  
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him  
But he, from his exceeding manfulness  
And pure nobility of temperament,  
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm,  
refrain'd

From ev'n a word, and so returning said

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,  
Done in your maiden's person to yourself  
And I will track this vermin to their  
earths

For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt  
To find, at some place I shall come at,  
arms

On loan, or else for pledge, and, being  
found,

Then will I fight him, and will break his  
pride,

And on the third day will again be here,  
So that I be not fall'n in fight Farewell'

'Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd 'the  
stately Queen

'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all,  
And may you light on all things that you  
love,

And live to wed with her whom first you  
love

But ere you wed with any, bring your  
bride,

And I, were she the daughter of a  
king,

Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the  
hedge,

Will clothe her for her bidals like the  
sun'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that  
he heard

The noble hurt at bay, now the far horn,  
A little vex at losing of the hunt,  
A little at the vile occasion, rode,  
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy  
glade

And valley, with first eye following the  
three

At last they issued from the world of  
wood,

And climb'd upon a fur and even ridge,  
And show'd themselves agunst the sky,  
and sunk

And thither came Geraint, and under  
north

Beheld the long street of a little town  
In a long valley, on one side whereof,  
White from the mason's hand, a fortress  
rose,

And on one side a castle in decay,  
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry  
rivine

And out of town and valley came a noise  
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed  
Bawling, or like a clamour of the rocks  
At distance, ere they settle for the night

And onward to the fortress rode the  
three,

And enter'd, and were lost behind the  
walls

'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd  
him to his earth'

And down the long street riding wearily,  
Found every hostel full, and everywhere  
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot  
hiss

And bustling whistle of the youth who  
scour'd

His master's armour, and of such a one  
He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in  
the town?'

Who told him, scouring still, 'The  
sparrow-hawk!'

Then riding close behind an ancient churl,  
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,  
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,  
Ask'd yet once more what meant the  
hubbub here?

Who answer'd guffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-  
hawk!'

Then riding further past an armourer's,  
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above  
his work,

Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,  
He put the self same query, but the man  
Not turning round, nor looking at him,  
said

'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-  
hawk

Has little time for idle questioners.'  
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden  
spleen

'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-  
hawk!'

Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck  
him dead!

'Ye think the rustic cackle of your boug  
The murmur of the world! What is it  
to me?

'O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,  
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-  
hawks!'

Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-  
mad,

Where can I get me harbourage for the  
night?

And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy?  
Speak!'

Whereat the armourer turning all amazed  
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,  
Came forward with the helmet yet in  
hand

And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger  
knight,

We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,  
And there is scanty time for half the work  
Arms? truth! I know not all are  
wanted here

Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know  
not, save,

It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge  
Yonder' He spoke and fell to work  
again

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,  
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry  
ravine

There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,  
(His dress a suit of fady'd magnificence,  
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and  
said

'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint  
replied,

'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the  
night'

Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake  
The slender entertainment of a house  
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-  
door'd'

'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied  
Geraint,

'So that ye do not seive me sparrow-  
hawks

For supper, I will enter, I will eat  
With all the passion of a twelve hours'  
fast'

Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed  
Earl,

And answer'd, 'Grieve cause than yours  
is mine

To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-  
hawk

But in, go in, for save yourself desire it,  
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,  
His charger trampling many a prickly  
star

Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones  
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous  
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed  
with fern,

And here had fall'n a great part of a  
tower,  
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the  
cliff,  
And like a crag was gray with wilding  
flowers  
And high above a piece of turret stair,  
Worn by the feet that now were silent,  
wound  
Baie to the sun, and monstrous ivy stems  
Claspt the gray walls with hurry fibred  
aims,  
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and  
look'd  
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove

And while he waited in the castle court,  
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang  
Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,  
Singing, and as the sweet voice of a bird,  
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,  
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is  
That sings so delicately clear, and make  
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,  
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Gerunt,  
And made him like a man abroad at morn  
When first the liquid note beloved of men  
Comes flying over many a windy wave  
To Britain, and in April suddenly  
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green  
and red,  
And he suspends his converse with a  
friend,  
Or it may be the labour of his hands,  
To think or say, 'There is the nightingale,'  
So fared it with Geraint, who thought  
and said,  
'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice  
for me'

It chanced the song that Enid sang  
was one  
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid  
sang

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and  
lower the proud,  
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine,  
storm, and cloud,  
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor  
hate

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with  
smile or frown,  
With that wild wheel we go not up or  
down,  
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are  
great

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many  
lands,  
Frown and we smile, the lords of our  
own hands,  
For man is man and master of his fate

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the stinging  
cloud,  
Thy wheel and thou art shadows in the  
cloud,  
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor  
hate'

'Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn  
the nest,'  
Said Yniol, 'enter quickly' Entering  
then,  
Right o'er a mount of newly fallen stones,  
The dusky after'd many cobweb'd hall,  
He found an ancient dame in dim bro  
cade,  
And near her, like a blossom vermeil  
white,  
That lightly breaks a faded flower sheath,  
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,  
Her daughter In a moment thought  
Gerunt,  
'Here by God's good is the one maid for  
me'

But none spake word except the hoary  
Earl  
'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in  
the court,  
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and  
then  
Go to the town and buy us flesh and  
wine,  
And we will make us merry as we may  
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are  
great'

He spake the Prince, as Enid part  
him, fain  
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught

His purple scarf, and held, and said,  
'Forbear !

Rest ! the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my  
son,

Endures not that her guest should serve  
himself '

And reveiencing the custom of the house  
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore

So Enid took his charger to the stall,  
And after went her way across the bridge,  
And reach'd the town, and while the  
Prince and Earl

Yet spoke together, came again with one,  
A youth, that following with a costiel boie  
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and  
wine

And Enid brought sweet cakes to make  
them cheer,

And in her veil enfolded, manchet bierd  
And then, because their hall must also  
serve

For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread  
the board,

And stood behind, and waited on the  
three

And seeing hei so sweet and serviceable,  
Geraint had longing in him evermoie  
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,  
That crost the trencher as she laid it  
down

But after all had eaten, then Geraint,  
For now the wine made summer in his  
veins,

I set his eye love in following, or rest  
On Enid at hei lowly handmaid work,  
Now here, now there, about the dusky  
hall,

Then suddenly address the hoary Earl

'Fair Host and Earl, I pry your  
courtesy,

This sparrow-hawk, what is he ? tell me  
of him

His name ? but no, good faith, I will not  
have it

For if he be the knight whom late I saw  
Ride into that new fortress by your town,  
White from the mason's hand, then have  
I sworn

From his own lips to have it—I am  
Geraint

Of Devon—for this morn'g when the  
Queen

Sent her own maiden to demand the name,  
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,  
Struck at hei with his whip, and she re-  
turn'd

Indignant to the Queen, and then I swore  
That I would track this catiff to his hold,  
And fight and break his pride, and have  
it of him

And all unaim'd I rode, and thought to  
find

Arms in your town, where all the men  
are mad,

They take the rustic murmur of their  
bourg

For the great wave that echoes round the  
world,

They would not hear me speak but if  
ye know

Where I can light on arms, or if yourself  
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have  
sworn

That I will break his pride and learn his  
name,

Avenging this great insult done the  
Queen '

Then cried Earl Ymoir, 'Art thou he  
indeed,

Geraint, a name full sounded among men  
For noble deeds ? and truly I, when first  
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,  
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your  
state

And presence might have guess'd you one  
of those

That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot  
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery,  
For this dear child hath often heard me  
praise

Your feats of arms, and often when I  
paused

Hath ask'd agun, and ever loved to hear,  
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds  
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong  
O never yet had woman such a pair  
Of sutois as this maiden, first Limours,

A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,  
 Drunk even when he woo'd, and be he dead  
 I know not, but he past to the wild land  
 The second was your foe, the sparrow hawk,  
 My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name  
 Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,  
 When I that knew him fiece and turbulent  
 Refused her to him, then his pride awoke,  
 And since the proud man often is the mean,  
 He sow'd a slander in the common ear,  
 Affirming that his father left him gold,  
 And in my charge, which was not render'd to him,  
 Bribed with large promises the men who served  
 About my person, the more easily  
 Because my means were somewhat broken into  
 Thro' open doors and hospitality,  
 Raised my own town against me in the night  
 Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house,  
 From mine own ealdom foully ousted me,  
 Built that new fort to overawe my friends,  
 For truly there are those who love me yet,  
 And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,  
 Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,  
 But that his pride too much despises me  
 And I myself sometimes despise myself,  
 For I have let men be, and have their way,  
 Am much too gentle, have not used my power  
 Nor know I whether I be very base  
 Or very manful, whether very wise  
 Or very foolish, only this I know,  
 That whatsoever evil happen to me,  
 I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,  
 But can endure it all most patiently'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint,  
 'but aims,  
 That if the sparrow hawk, this nephew,  
 fight  
 In next day's tounney I may break his pride'  
 And Yniol answer'd, 'Arms, indeed,  
 but old  
 And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,  
 Aie mine, and therefore at thine asking,  
 thine  
 But in this tournament can no man tilt,  
 Except the lady he loves best be there  
 Two forks are fyt into the meadow  
 ground,  
 And over these is placed a silver wand,  
 And over that a golden sparrow hawk,  
 The prize of beauty for the furest there  
 And this, what knight soever be in field  
 Lays claim to for the lady at his side,  
 And tilts with my good nephew there  
 upon,  
 Who being apt at aims and big of bone  
 Has ever won it for the lady with him,  
 And toppling over all antagonism  
 Has eain'd himself the name of sparrow  
 hawk  
 But thou, that hast no lady, canst not  
 fight'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright  
 replied,  
 I earning a little toward him, 'Thy leave'  
 Let me lay lance in rest, O noble host,  
 For this dear child, because I never saw,  
 Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,  
 Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair  
 And if I fall her name will yet remain  
 Untarnish'd as before, but if I live,  
 So aid me Heaven when at mine utter  
 most,  
 As I will make her truly my true wife'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart  
 Danced in his bosom, seeing better days  
 And looking round he saw not Enid there,  
 (Who hearing her own name had stol'n  
 away)  
 But that old dame, to whom full tenderly  
 And fondling all her hand in his he said,



'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,  
And best by her that bore her understood  
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest  
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the  
Prince'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and  
she  
With frequent smile and nod departing  
found,

Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl,  
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek,  
and then

On either shining shoulder laid a hand,  
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,  
And told her all their converse in the hall,  
Proving her heart but never light and  
shade

Coursed one another more on open ground  
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and  
pale

Across the face of Enid hearing her,  
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,  
When weight is added only grain by grain,  
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle  
breast,

Not did she lift an eye nor speak a word,  
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it,  
So moving without answer to her rest  
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw  
The quiet night into her blood, but lay  
Contemplating her own unworthiness,  
And when the pale and bloodless east  
began

To quicken to the sun, arose, and roused  
Her mother too, and hand in hand they  
moved

Down to the meadow where the jousts  
were held,

And waited there for Yniol and Geraint

And thither came the twain, and when  
Geraint

Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,  
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,  
Himself beyond the rest pushing could  
move

The chair of Idris Yniol's rusted arms  
Were on his princely person, but thro'  
these

Piimcelike his bearing shone, and errant  
knights

And ladies came, and by and by the town  
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists  
And there they fixt the forks into the  
ground,

And over these they placed the silver wand,  
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk  
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet  
blown,

Spake to the lady with him and pro-  
claim'd,

'Advance and take as fairest of the fair,  
For I these two years past have won it  
for thee,

The prize of beauty' Loudly spake the  
Prince,

'Forbear there is a worthier,' and the  
knight

With some surprise and thence as much  
disdain

Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his  
face

Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at  
Yule,

So burnt he was with passion, crying out,  
'Do battle for it then,' no more, and  
thrice

They clash'd together, and thrice they  
broke their spears

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd  
at each

So often and with such blows, that all the  
crowd

Wonder'd, and now and then from distant  
walls

There came a clapping as of phantom  
hands

So twice they fought, and twice they  
breathed, and still

The dew of their great labour, and the  
blood

Of their strong bodies, flowing, diam'd  
their force

But either's force was match'd till Yniol's  
cry,

'Remember that great insult done the  
Queen,'

Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade  
aloft,

And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the  
bone,  
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his  
bicast,  
And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the  
fallen man  
Made answer, groaning, 'Edyin, son of  
Nudd !'  
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee  
My pride is broken men have seen my  
fall '  
'Then, Edyin, son of Nudd,' replied  
Gerunt,  
'These two things shalt thou do, or else  
thou diest  
First, thou thyself, with damsel and with  
dwarf,  
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming  
there,  
Clave pardon for that insult done the  
Queen,  
And shalt abide her judgment on it, next,  
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy  
kin  
These two things shalt thou do, or thou  
shalt die '  
And Edyin answer'd, 'These things will  
I do,  
For I have never yet been overthrown,  
And thou hast overthrown me, and my  
pride  
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall !'  
And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,  
And there the Queen forgave him easily  
And being young, he changed and came  
to lorthie  
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself  
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at  
last  
In the great battle fighting for the King

But when the third day from the  
hunting-morn  
Made a low splendour in the world, and  
wings  
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay  
With her fair head in the dim yellow light,  
Among the dancing shadows of the buds,  
Woke and bethought her of her promise  
given

No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—  
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,  
He would not leave her, till her promise  
given—

To ride with him this morning to the  
court,  
And there be made known to the stately  
Queen,

And there be wedded with all ceremony  
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,  
And thought it never yet had look'd so  
mean

For as a leaf in mid November is  
To what it was in mid October, seem'd  
The dress that now she look'd on to the  
dress

She look'd on to the coming of Geraint  
And still she look'd, and still the terror  
grew

Of that strange bright and dreadful thing,  
a court,

All stung at her in her faded silk  
And softly to her own sweet heart she said

'This noble prince who won our  
earldom here,  
So splendid in his acts and his attire,  
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit  
him !

Would he could tarry with us here awhile,  
But being so beholden to the Prince,  
It were but little grace in any of us,  
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,  
To seek a second favour at his hands  
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,  
Myself would work eye dim, and finger  
lame,  
Far liefer than so much discredit him '

And Enid fell in longing for a dress  
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a  
costly gift

Of her good mother, given her on the  
night

Before her birthday, thice sad years ago,  
That night of fire, when Edyin sack'd  
their house,

And scatter'd all they had to all the winds  
For while the mother show'd it, and the  
two

Were turning and admiring it, the work  
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry  
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they  
fled

With little save the jewels they had on,  
Which being sold and sold had bought  
them bread

And Edyrn's men had caught them in  
their flight,

And placed them in this ruin, and she  
wish'd

The Prince had found her in her ancient  
home,

Then let her fancy flit across the past,  
And roam the goodly places that she  
knew,

And last bethought her how she used to  
watch,

Near that old home, a pool of golden carp,  
And one was patch'd and blur'd and  
lustreless

Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool,  
And half asleep she made comparison  
Of that and those to her own faded self  
And the gay court, and fell asleep again,  
And dreamt herself was such a faded form  
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool,  
But this was in the garden of a king,  
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she  
knew

That all was bright, that all about were  
birds

Of sunny plumage in gilded tidels work,  
That all the turf was rich in plots that  
look'd

Each like a garnet or a turkis in it,  
And lords and ladies of the high court  
went

In silver tissue talking things of state,  
And children of the King in cloth of  
gold

Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down  
the walks,

And while she thought 'They will not  
see me,' came

A stately queen whose name was  
Guinevere,

And all the children in their cloth of gold  
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at  
all

Let them be gold, and charge the  
gardeners now

To pick the faded creature from the pool,  
And cast it on the miven that it die'

And therewithal one came and seized on  
her,

And Enid started waking, with her heart  
All overshadow'd by 'the foolish dream,  
And lo! it was her mother grasping her  
To get her well awake, and in her hand  
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid  
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly

'See here, my child, how fresh the  
colours look,

How fast they hold like colours of a shell  
That keeps the wear and polish of the  
wave

Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow  
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know  
it'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at  
first,

Could scarce divide it from her foolish  
dream

Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,  
And answer'd, 'Yea, I know it, your  
good gift,

So sadly lost on that unhappy night,  
Your own good gift!' 'Yea, surely,' said  
the dame,

'And gladly given again this happy morn  
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,  
Went Yniol thro' the town, and every  
where

He found the sack and plunder of our  
house

All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town,  
And gave command that all which once  
was ours

Should now be ours again and yester eve,  
While ye were talking sweetly with you  
Prince,

Came one with this and laid it in my hand,  
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,  
Because we have our carldom back again  
And yester eve I would not tell you of it,  
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn  
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?

For I myself unwillingly have worn  
My faded suit, as you, my child, have  
yours,

And howsoever patient, Yniol his  
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,  
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,  
And page, and maid, and squire, and  
seneschal,

And pastime both of hawk and hound,  
and all

That appertains to noble maintenance  
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house,  
But since our fortune swerved from sun to  
shade,

And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need  
Constrain'd us, but a better time has  
come,

So clothe yourself in this, that better fits  
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride  
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,  
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,  
Let never maiden think, however fair,  
She is not fairer in new clothes than old  
And should some great court-lady say, the  
Prince

Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the  
hedge,

And like a madman brought her to the  
court,

Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might  
shame the Prince

To whom we are beholden, but I know,  
When my dear child is set forth at her best,  
That neither court nor country, tho' they  
sought

Thro' all the provinces like those of old  
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her  
match'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of  
breath,

And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay,  
Then, as the white and glittering star of  
morn

Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by  
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,  
And left her maiden couch, and robed  
herself,

Help'd by the mother's careful hand and  
eye,

Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown,  
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round,  
and said,

She never yet had seen her half so fair,  
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,  
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of  
flowers,

And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,  
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cresai  
first

Invaded Britain, 'But we beat him back,  
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,  
Not beat him back, but welcomed him  
with joy

And I can scarcely ride with you to court,  
For old am I, and rough the ways and  
wild,

But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream  
I see my princess as I see her now,  
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the  
gay'

But while the women thus rejoiced,  
Geraint

Woke where he slept in the high hall, and  
call'd

For Enid, and when Yniol made report  
Of that good mother making Enid gay  
In such apparel as might well besem  
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,  
He answer'd 'Erel, entreat her by my  
love,

Albeit I give no reason but my wish,  
That she ride with me in her faded silk'  
Yniol with that hard message went, it fell  
Like flaws in summer lying lusty corn  
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,  
Dared not to glance at her good mother's-  
face,

But silently, in all obedience,  
Her mother silent too, not helping her,  
Laid from her limbs the costly broder'd  
gift,

And robed them in her ancient suit again,  
And so descended Never man rejoiced  
More than Geraint to greet her thus  
attired,

And glancing all at once as keenly at her  
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,  
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,

But rested with her sweet face satisfied,  
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,  
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly  
said,

O my new mother, be not wroth or  
grieved

At thy new son, for my petition to her  
When late I left Caerleon, our great  
Queen,

In words whose echo lasts, they were so  
sweet,

Made promise, that whatever bide I  
brought,

Herself would clothe her like the sun in  
Heaven

Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hall,  
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,

I vow'd that could I gain her, our fair  
Queen,

No hand but hers, should make your End  
burst

Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought  
perhaps,

That service done so graciously would  
bind

The two together, fain I would the two  
Should love each other how can End  
find

A nobler friend? Another thought was  
mine,

I came among you here so suddenly,  
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists  
Might well have served for proof that I  
was loved,

I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,  
Or easy nature, might not let itself

\* Be moulded by your wishes for her weal,  
Or whether some false sense in her own  
self

Of my contrasting brightness, overbore  
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall,  
And such a sense might make her long  
for count

And all its perilous glories and I  
thought,

That could I somehow prove such force  
in her

Link'd with such love for me, that at a  
word

(No reason given her) she could cast aside  
A splendour dear to women, new to her,  
And therefore dearer, or if not so new,  
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power  
Of intermitted usage, then I felt

That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and  
flows,

Fixt on her faith Now, therefore, I do  
rest,

A prophet certain of my prophecy,  
That never shadow of mistrust can cross  
Between us Grant me pardon for my

thoughts

And for my strange petition I will make  
Amends hereafter by some grudging day,

When you fair child shall wear your  
costly gift

Beside your own warm hearth, with, on  
her knees,

Who knows? another gift of the high  
God,

Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to list  
you thanks'

He spoke the mother smiled, but half  
in tears,

Then brought a mantle down and wrapt  
her in it,

And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode  
away

Now thence that morning Guinevere had  
climb'd

The giant tower, from whose high crest,  
they say,

Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,  
And white sails flying on the yellow sea,

But not to goodly hill or yellow sea  
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale  
of Usk,

By the flat meadow, till she saw them  
come,

And then descending met them at the  
gates,

Embraced her with all welcome as a  
friend,

And did her honour as the Prince's bride,  
And clothed her for her bridal like the  
sun,

And all that week was old Caerleon gay,

For by the hands of Dubric, the high  
saint,  
They twain were wedded with all cere-  
mony

And this was on the last year's Whit-  
suntide

But Enid ever kept the faded silk,  
Remembering how first he came on her,  
Diest in that dress, and how he loved  
her in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,  
And all his journey toward her, as him  
self

Had told her, and then coming to the  
court

And now this morning when he said  
to her,

'Put on your woist and meanest dress,'  
she found

And took it, and array'd herself therein

## II

O purblind race of miserable men,  
How many among us at this very hour  
Do forge a life long trouble for ourselves,  
By taking true for false, or false for true,  
Heir, thro' the feeble twilight of this world  
Groping, how many, until we pass and  
reach

That other, where we see as we are seen'

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing  
forth

That morning, when they both had got  
to horse,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,  
And felt that tempest brooding round his  
heart,

Which, if he spoke at all would break  
perforce

Upon a head so dear in thunder, said  
'Not at my side I charge thee ride  
before,

Ever a good way on before, and thus  
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,  
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,  
No, not a word!' and Enid was aghast,  
And forth they rode, but scarce three  
paces on,

When crying out, 'Effeminate as I am,  
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,  
All shall be none,' he loosed a mighty  
purse,

Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward  
the squire

So the last sight that Enid had of home  
Was all the marble threshold flashing,  
strown

With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the  
squire

Chafing his shoulder then he cried again,  
'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down  
the tracks

Thro' which he had her lead him on,  
they past

The marches, and by bandit haunted  
holds,

Gray swamps and pools, waste places of  
the fern,

And wildernesses, perilous paths, they  
rode

Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd  
soon

A stranger meeting them had surely  
thought

They rode so slowly and they look'd so  
pale,

That each had suffer'd some exceeding  
wrong

For he was ever saying to himself,  
'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,  
To compass her with sweet observances,  
To dress her beautifully and keep her  
true'—

And there he broke the sentence in his  
heart

Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue  
May break it, when his passion masters  
him

And she was ever praying the sweet  
heavens

To save her dear lord whole from any  
wound

And ever in her mind she cast about  
For that unnoticed failing in herself,  
Which made him look so cloudy and so  
cold,

Till the great plover's human whistle  
amazed

Her heart, and glancing round the waste  
she fear'd

In every wav'ring brake an ambuscade  
Then thought again, 'If there be such in  
me,

I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,  
If he would only speak and tell me of it'

But when the fourth part of the day  
was gone,

Then Enid was aware of three tall knights  
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a  
rock

In shadow, waiting for them, cariffs all,  
And heard one crying to his fellow,

'Look,

Here comes a lagga'd hanging down his  
head,

Who seems no bolder than a berten  
hound,

Come, we will slay him and will have his  
horse

And armour, and his damsel shall be  
ours'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and  
said

'I will go back a little to my lord,  
And I will tell him all their crafty talk,  
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,  
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,  
Than that my lord should suffer loss or  
shame'

Then she went back some paces of  
return,

Met his full frown timidly firm, and said,  
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the  
rock

Waiting to fall on you, and heard them  
boast

That they would slay you, and possess  
your horse

And armour, and your damsel should be  
theirs'

He made a wrathful answer 'Did I  
wish

Your warning or your silence? one com-  
mand

I had upon you, not to speak to me,

And thus ye keep it! Well then, look  
—for now,

Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,  
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,  
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,  
And down upon him bare the bandit  
three

And at the midmost charging, Prince  
Geraint

Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his  
breast

And out beyond, and then against his  
brace

Of comrades, each of whom had broken  
on him

A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,  
Swung from his hand a windy buffet out

Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd  
the twain

Or slew them, and dismounting like a man  
That skins the wild beast after slaying  
him,

Snapt from the three dead wolves of  
woman's bane

The three gay suits of armour which they  
wore,

And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits  
Of armour on their horses, each on each,

And tied the bundle reins of all the three  
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them  
on

Before you,' and she drove them thro'  
the waste

He follow'd never ruth began to  
work

Against his anger in him, while he watch'd  
The being he loved best in all the world,

With difficulty in mild obedience  
Driving them on the fain had spoken to  
her,

And loosed in words of sudden fire the  
wrath

And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all  
within,

But evermore it seem'd an easier thing  
At once without remorse to strike her  
dead,

Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own  
 bright face  
 Accuse her of the least immodesty  
 And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth  
 the more  
 That she *could* speak whom his own ear  
 had heard  
 Call himself false and suffering thus he  
 made  
 Minutes an age but in scarce longer time  
 Than at Caerleon the full tided Usk,  
 Before he tun to fall seaward again,  
 Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold  
 In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,  
 Before a gloom of stubborn shafted oaks,  
 Three other horsemen waiting, wholly  
 arm'd,  
 Whereof one seem'd far larger than her  
 lord,  
 And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a  
 prize'  
 Three horses and three goodly suits of  
 arms,  
 And all in charge of whom? a gulf set on'  
 'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a  
 knight'  
 The third, 'A craven, how he hangs his  
 head'  
 The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one?  
 Wait here, and when he passes fall upon  
 him'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and  
 said,  
 'I will abide the coming of my lord,  
 And I will tell him all their villainy  
 My lord is weary with the fight before,  
 And they will fall upon him unawares  
 I needs must disobey him for his good,  
 How should I dare obey him to his harm?  
 Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me  
 for it,  
 I save a life dearer to me than mine'

And she abode his coming, and said to  
 him  
 With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to  
 speak?'  
 He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she  
 spoke

'There lurk three villains yonder in the  
 wood,  
 And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one  
 Is larger limb'd than you are, and they say  
 That they will fall upon you while ye  
 pass'

To which he flung a wrathful answer  
 back  
 'And if there were an hundred in the  
 wood,  
 And every man were larger limb'd than I,  
 And all at once should sally out upon me,  
 I swear it would not ruffle me so much  
 As you that not obey me Stand aside,  
 And if I fall, cleave to the better man'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,  
 Not dare to watch the combat, only  
 breathe  
 Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a  
 breath  
 And he, she minded most, brue down  
 upon him  
 Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd, but  
 Geraint's,  
 A little in the late encounter strain'd,  
 Struck thro' the bulky brandit's corslet  
 home,  
 And then brake short, and down his  
 enemy roll'd,  
 And there lay still, as he that tells the  
 tale

Saw once a great piece of a promontory,  
 That had a sapling growing on it, slide  
 From the long shore cliff's windy walls  
 to the beach,  
 And there he still, and yet the sapling  
 grew  
 So lay the man transfixt His craven pair  
 Of comrades making slower at the  
 Prince,  
 When now they saw their bulwark fallen,  
 stood,  
 On whom the victor, to confound them  
 more,  
 Spun'd with his terrible war cry, for as  
 one,  
 That listens near a torrent mountain  
 brook,



All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears  
The drumming thunder of the huge fall  
At distance, were the soldiers wont to  
hear

His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,  
And foemen scared, like that false pair  
who turn'd

Flying, but, overtaken, died the death  
Themselves had wrought on many an  
innocent

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd  
the lance

That pleased him best, and slew from  
those dead wolves

Then three gay suits of armour, each from  
each,

And bound them on their horses, each on  
each,

And tied the bridle-reins of all the three  
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on  
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the  
wood

He follow'd nearer still the pain she  
had

To keep them in the wild ways of the  
wood,

Two sets of three laden with jingling  
arms,

Together, served a little to disedge  
The sharpness of that pain about her  
heart

And they themselves, like creatures gently  
born

But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long  
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light  
ears, and felt

\* Her low firm voice and tender government

So thro' the green gloom of the wood  
they past,

And issuing under open heavens beheld  
A little town with towers, upon a rock,  
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike  
chased

In the brown wild, and mowers mowing  
in it

And down a rocky pathway from the place  
There came a fair hand'd youth, that in  
his hand

Bare victual for the mowers and Geraint  
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale  
Then, moving downwa'd to the meadow  
ground,

He, when the fair hair'd youth came by  
him, said,

'Friend, let her eat, the damsel is so  
faint'

'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth, 'and  
thou,

My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,  
And only meet for mowers,' then set  
down

His basket, and dismounting on the sward  
They let the horses graze, and ate them  
selves

And Enid took a little delicately,  
Less having stomach for it than desire  
To close with her lord's pleasure, but  
Geraint

Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,  
And when he found all empty, was  
amazed,

And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all,  
but take

A horse and arms for guerdon, choose  
the best'

He, reddening in extremity of delight,  
'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the  
Prince

'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,  
'Not guerdon, for myself can easily,  
While your good damsel rests, return,  
and fetch

Fresh victual for these mowers of our  
Eail,

For these are his, and all the field is his,  
And I myself am his, and I will tell  
him

How great a man thou art he loves to  
know

When men of mark are in his territory  
And he will have thee to his palace here,  
And serve thee costlier than with mowers'  
fare'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better  
fare

I never ate with angrier appetite

Than when I left your mowers dinnerless  
And into no Earl's palace will I go  
I know, God knows, too much of  
palaces'

And if he want me, let him come to me  
But hire us some fair chamber for the  
night,  
And stalling for the horses, and return  
With victual for these men, and let us  
know'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad  
youth, and went,  
Held his head high, and thought himself  
a knight,  
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,  
Leading the horse, and they were left  
alone

But when the Pince had brought his  
eriant eyes  
Home from the rock, sideways he let  
them glance

At Enid, where she droopt his own  
false doom,

That shadow of mistrust should never cross  
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he  
sigh'd,

Then with another humorous ruth re-  
mark'd

The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,  
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning  
scythe,

And after nodded sleepily in the heat  
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,  
And all the windy clamour of the daws  
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the  
grass

There growing longest by the meadow's  
edge,

And into many a listless annulet,  
Now over, now beneath her marriage  
ring,

Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd  
And told them of a chamber, and they  
went,

Where, after saying to her, 'If ye will,  
Call for the woman of the house,' to which  
She answer'd, 'Thanks, my lord,' the  
two remain'd

Apart by all the chamber's width, and  
mute

As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of  
buth,

Or two wild men supporters of a shield,  
Painted, who stare at open space, nor  
glance

The one at other, parted by the shield

On a sudden, many a voice along the  
street,

And hecl against the pavement echoing,  
bust

Then diowse, and either started while  
the door,

Push'd from without, diave backward to  
the wall,

And midstmost of a rout of roisterers,  
Femininely fan and dissolutely pale,  
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,  
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place,  
Limours

He moving up with phiant courtliness,  
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,  
In the mid wumth of welcome and graspt  
hand,

Found Enid with the corner of his eye,  
And knew her sitting sad and solitary  
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly  
cheer

To feed the sudden guest, and sump-  
tuously

According to his fashion, had the host  
Call in what men soever were his friends,  
And feast with these in honour of their  
Earl,

'And cure not for the cost, the cost is  
mine'

And wine and food were brought, and  
Earl Limours

Drank till he jested with all ease, and told  
Free tales, and took the word and play'd  
upon it,

And made it of two colours, for his talk,  
When wine and free companions kindled  
him,

Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem  
Of fifty facets, thus he moved the Pince  
To laughter and his comrades to applause

Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd  
Limous,

'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room,  
and speak

To your good damsel there who sits apart,  
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,'  
he said,

'Get her to speak she doth not speak to  
me'

Then rose Limous, and looking at his  
feet,

Like him who tries the bridge he fears  
may fail,

Croste and came near, lifted adoring eyes,  
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisper  
ingly

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,  
Enid, my early and my only love,  
Enid, the loss of whom hath turn'd me  
wild—

What chance is this? how is it I see you  
here'

Ye are in my power at last, are in my  
power

Yet fear me not I call mine own self  
wild,

But keep a touch of sweet civility  
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness  
I thought, but that your father came  
between,

In former days you saw me favourably  
And if it were so do not keep it back

Make me a little happier let me know it  
(Owe you me nothing for a life half lost?)

Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you  
are

And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,  
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,  
You come with no attendance, page or  
maid,

To serve you—doth he love you as of old?  
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know  
Tho' men may bicker with the things they  
love,

They would not make them laughable in  
all eyes,

Not while they loved them, and you  
wretched dress,

A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks

Your story, that this man loves you no  
more

Your beauty is no beauty to him now  
A common chance—right well I know it  
—pall'd—

For I know men nor will ye win him  
back,

For the man's love once gone never  
returns

But here is one who loves you as of old,  
With more exceeding passion than of old

Good, speak the word my followers ring  
him round

He sits unarm'd, I hold a finger up,  
They understand nay, I do not mean  
blood

Nor need ye look so scared at what I say  
My malice is no deeper than a moat,  
No stronger than a wall there is the  
keep,

He shall not cross us more, speak but  
the word

O! speak it not, but then by Him that  
made me

The one true lover whom you ever own'd,  
I will make use of all the power I have  
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,  
When first I parted from thee, moves me  
yet'

At this the tender sound of his own  
voice

And sweet self pity, or the fancy of it,  
Made his eye moist, but Enid hid his  
eyes,

Moist as they were, wine heated from the  
feast,

And answer'd with such craft as women  
use,

Guiltless or guiltless, to stave off a chance  
That breaks upon them perilously, and  
said

'Earl, if you love me as in former  
years,

And do not practise on me, come with  
morn,

And snatch me from him as by violence,  
Leave me to night I am weary to the  
death'

Low at leave taking, with his brandish'd  
plume  
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-  
amorous Earl,  
And the stout Prince bad him a loud  
good night  
He moving homeward babbled to his men,  
How Enid never loved a man but him,  
Nor cared a broken egg shell for her lord

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,  
Debating his command of silence given,  
And that she now perforce must violate it,  
Held commune with herself, and while  
she held

He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart  
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly  
pleased

To find him yet unwounded after fight,  
And hear him breathing low and equally  
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly,  
heav'd

The pieces of his armour in one place,  
All to be there against a sudden need,  
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtold  
By that day's grief and travel, evermore  
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and  
then

Went slipping down horrible precipices,  
And strongly striking out her limbs  
awoke,

Then thought she heard the wild Earl at  
the door,

With all his rout of random followers,  
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning  
her,

Which was the red cock shouting to the  
light,

As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy  
world,

And glimmer'd on his armour in the room  
And once again she rose to look at it,  
But touch'd it unawares jangling, the  
casque

Fell, and he started up and stared at her  
Then breaking his command of silence  
given,

She told him all that Earl Limours had  
said,

Except the passage that he loved her not,

Nor left untold the craft heiself had used,  
But ended with apology so sweet,  
Low spoken, and of so few words, and  
seem'd

So justified by that necessity,  
That tho' he thought 'was it for him she  
wept

In Devon?' he but gave a wrathful groan,  
Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good  
fellows fools

And traitors Call the host and bid him  
bring

Charger and palfrey' So she glided out  
Among the heavy breathings of the  
house,

And like a household Spirit at the walls  
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and  
return'd

Then tending her rough lord, tho' all  
unask'd,

In silence, did him service as a squire,  
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and  
cried,

'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he  
learnt it, 'Take

Five horses and their armours,' and the  
host

Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,  
'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth  
of one'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the  
Prince,

And then to Enid, 'Forward' and to  
day

I charge you, Enid, more especially,  
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,  
Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use  
To charge you) that ye speak not but  
obey'

And Enid answer'd, 'Yea, my lord,  
I know

Your wish, and would obey, but riding  
first,

I hear the violent threats you do not  
hear,

I see the danger which you cannot see  
Then not to give you warning, that seems  
hard,

Almost beyond me yet I would obey'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it be not too wise,  
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,  
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,  
But one with aims to guard his head and yours,  
With eyes to find you out however far,  
And ears to hear you even in his dreams'

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her  
As careful robins eye the deliver's toil,  
And that within her, which a wanton fool,  
Or hasty judge would have call'd her guilt,  
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall  
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,  
Led from the territory of false Limours  
To the waste earldom of another earl,  
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,  
Went Enid with her sullen follower on  
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride  
More near by many a rood than yesternoon,  
It wellnigh made her cheerful, till Geraint  
Waving an angry hand as who should say  
'Ye watch me,' sadden'd all her heart again  
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,  
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof  
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw  
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it  
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,  
And yet to give him warning, for he rode  
As if he heard not, moving back she held  
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust  
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,  
Because she kept the letter of his word,  
Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood  
And in the moment after, wild Limours,

Borne on a black horse, like a thunder cloud  
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,  
Half sudden off with by the thing he rode,  
And all in passion uttering a day shriek,  
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore  
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond  
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd on dead,  
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,  
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind  
But at the flash and motion of the man  
They vanish'd panic stricken, like a shoal  
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn  
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot  
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,  
But if a man who stands upon the brink  
But lift a shining hand against the sun,  
There is not left the twinkle of a fin  
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower,  
So, scared but at the motion of the man,  
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,  
And left him lying in the public way,  
So vanish friendships only made in wine

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,  
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell  
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,  
Mixt with the flyers 'Horse and man,' he said,  
'All of one mind and all right honest friends'  
Not a hoof left and I methinks till now  
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms,  
I cannot steal or plunder, nor nor beg  
And so what say ye, shall we stir him there  
Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough  
To bear his amour? shall we fist, or dine?  
No?—then do thou, being right honest, pray  
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,

I too would still be honest ' Thus he  
said  
And sadly gazing on her bundle reins,  
And answering not one word, she led the  
way

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss  
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,  
But coming back he learns it, and the loss  
So puns him that he sickens nigh to  
death,

So fared it with Geraint, who being pluck'd  
In combat with the follower of Lunois,  
Bled underneath his armour secretly,  
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife  
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,  
Till his eye drunken and his helmet  
wagg'd,

And at a sudden swerving of the road,  
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,  
The Prince, without a word, from his  
horse fell

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,  
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale  
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his  
arms,

Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye  
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,  
And tearing off her veil of faded silk  
Had bried her forehead to the blistering  
sun,

And swathed the hurt that drun'd her  
dear lord's life

Then after all was done that hand could do,  
She rested, and her desolation came  
Upon her, and she wept beside the way

And many past, but none regarded her,  
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,  
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate  
Wascared as much for as a summer shower  
One took him for a victim of Earl Doom,  
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him  
Another hurrying past, a man at-arms,  
Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl,  
Half whistling and half singing a coarse  
song,

He drove the dust against her veilleseyes  
Another, flying from the wrath of Doom  
Before an ever fancied arrow, made

The long way smoke beneath him in his  
feet,  
At which her palfrey whinnying lifted  
heel,  
And scoured into the coppices and was lost,  
While the great charger stood, grieved  
like a man

But at the point of noon the huge Earl  
Doom,  
Broad faced with under fringe of russet  
beard,  
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,  
Came riding with a hundred lances up,  
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,  
Cried out with a big voice, 'What, is he  
dead?'

'No, no, not dead!' she answered in all  
haste

'Would some of your kind people take  
him up,  
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?  
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead'

Then said Earl Doom 'Well, if he  
be not dead,

Why wail ye for him thus? ye seem a child  
And be he dead, I count you for a fool,  
Your wailing will not quicken him—dead  
or not,

Ye men a comely face with red hot tears  
Yet, since the face is comely—some of you,  
Here, take him up, and bear him to our  
hall

And if he live, we will have him of our  
band,

And if he die, why earth has earth enough  
To hide him—see ye take the charger too,  
A noble one'

He spake, and past away,  
But left two brawny spearmen, who  
advanced,

Each growling like a dog, when his good  
bone

Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys  
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears  
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,  
Gnawing and growling so the ruffians  
growld,

Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,

Then chance of booty from the morning's  
raid,

Yet raised and laid him on a litter bier,  
Such as they brought upon their forays out  
For those that might be wounded, laid  
him on it

All in the hollow of his shield, and took  
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorn,  
(His gentle chaiger following him unled)  
And crast him and the bier in which he  
lay

Down on an oaken settle in the hall,  
And then deprived, hot in haste to join  
Their luckier mates, but growling as  
before,

And cursing then lost time, and the dead  
man,

And their own Earl, and their own souls,  
and hei

They might as well have blest hei she  
was deaf

To blessing or to cursing save from one

So for long hours sat Enid by hei lord,  
There in the naked hall, propping his  
head,

And chafing his pale hands, and calling  
to him

Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon,  
And found his own dear bride propping  
his head,

And chafing his faint hands, and calling  
to him,

And felt the warm tears falling on his face,  
And said to his own heart, 'She weeps  
for me'

And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as  
dead,

That he might prove her to the uttermost,  
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps  
for me'

But in the falling afternoon return'd  
The huge Earl Doorn with plunder to  
the hall

His lusty spearmen follow'd him with  
noise

Each hurling down a heap of things that  
rang

Against the pave ment, crast his lance aside,

And doff'd his helm and then there  
flutter'd in,

Half bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,  
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,  
And mingled with the spearmen and  
Earl Doorn

Struck with a knife's haft laid against  
the board,

And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his  
spears

And men brought in whole hogs and  
quater beeves,

And all the hall was dim with steam of  
flesh

And none spoke word, but all sat down  
at once,

And ate with tumult in the naked hall,  
Feeding like horses when you hear them  
feed,

Till Enid shrunk far back into herself,  
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe  
But when Earl Doorn had eaten all he  
would,

He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and  
found

A damsel drooping in a corner of it  
Then he remember'd hei, and how she  
wept,

And out of hei there came a power upon  
him,

And rising on the sudden he said, 'Eat'  
I never yet beheld a thing so pale  
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you  
weep

But! Look yourself Good luck had  
you good man,

For were I dead who is it would weep  
for me?

Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath  
Have I beheld a hily like yourself  
And so there lived some colour in your  
cheek,

There is not one among my gentlewomen  
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove  
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,  
And I will do the thing I have not done,  
For ye shall share my earldom with me,  
gul,

And we will live like two birds in one  
nest,

And I will fetch you forage from all  
fields,  
For I compel all creatures to my will'

He spoke the brawny spearman let  
his cheek  
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and  
turning stared,  
While some, whose souls the old serpent  
long had diawn  
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd  
leaf

And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's  
ear

What shall not be recorded—women they,  
Women, or what had been those gracious  
things,

But now desired the humbling of their  
best,

Yea, would have help'd him to it and  
all at once

They hated her, who took no thought of  
them,

But answer'd in low voice, her meek head  
yet

Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesies,  
He being as he is, to let me be'

She spake so low he hardly heard her  
speech,

But like a mighty patron, satisfied  
With what himself had done so graciously,

Assumed that she had thank'd him, adding, 'Yea,

Eat and be glad, for I account you mine'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I  
be glad

Henceforth in all the world at anything,  
Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Eail cried out upon her  
talk,

As all but empty heart and weariness  
And sickly nothing, suddenly seized on  
her,

And bare her by main violence to the  
board,

And thrust the dish before her, crying,  
'Eat'

'No, no,' said Enid, next, 'I will not  
eat

Till yonder man upon the bier arise,  
And eat with me' 'Drink, then,' he  
answer'd 'Here'

(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it  
to her,)

'Lo' I, myself, when flush'd with fight,  
or hot,

God's curse, with anger—often I myself,  
Before I well have drunken, sauce can  
eat

Drink therefore and the wine will change  
your will'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I  
will not drink

Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,  
And drink with me, and if he rise no  
more,

I will not look at wine until I die'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his  
hall,

Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper  
lip,

And coming up close to her, said at last  
'Girl, for I set ye scorn my courtesies,  
Take warning yonder man is surely  
dead,

And I compel all creatures to my will  
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail  
for one,

Who put your beauty to this flout and  
scorn

By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,  
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,  
That I forbear you thus cross me no  
more

At least put off to please me this poor  
gown,

This silken rag, this beggar-woman's  
weed

I love that beauty should go beautifully  
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,  
How gay, how suited to the house of one  
Who loves that beauty should go beauti-  
fully?'

Rise therefore, robe yourself in this  
obey'



He spoke, and one among his gentle  
women  
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,  
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue  
Play'd into green, and thicker down the  
front  
With jewels than the sward with drops of  
dew,  
When all night long a cloud clings to the  
hill,  
And with the dawn ascending lets the day  
Strike where it clung so thickly shone  
the gems

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved  
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,  
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,  
And now their hour has come, and Enid  
said

'In this poor gown my dear lord found  
me first,  
And loved me sewing in my father's hall  
In this poor gown I rode with him to  
court,  
And there the Queen array'd me like the  
sun  
In this poor gown he bad me clothe  
myself,  
When now we rode upon this fatal quest  
Of honour, where no honour can be  
gain'd  
And this poor gown I will not cast aside  
Until himself arise a living man,  
And bid me cast it I have griefs enough  
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be  
I never loved, can never love but him  
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,  
'He being as he is, to let me be'

Then strode the brute Earl up and  
down his hall,  
And took his russet beard between his  
teeth,  
Last, coming up quite close, and in his  
mood  
Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,  
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with  
you,  
Fake my salute,' unknighly with flat hand,  
However lightly, smote her on the cheek

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,  
And since she thought, He had not  
dared to do it,  
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,  
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,  
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,  
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the  
wood

This heard Geraint, and grasping at  
his sword,  
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),  
Made but a single bound, and with a  
sweep of it  
Shore thro' the swathy neck, and like a  
ball  
The russet bearded head roll'd on the  
floor  
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted  
dead  
And all the men and women in the hall  
Rose when they saw the dead man rise,  
and fled  
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two  
Were left alone together, and he said

'Enid, I have used you worse than  
that dead man,  
Done you more wrong we both have  
undergone  
That trouble which has left me thine  
your own  
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt  
And here I lay this penance on myself,  
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you  
yesternight—  
You thought me sleeping, but I heard  
you say,  
I heard you say, that you were no true  
wife  
I swear I will not ask your meaning in  
it  
I do believe yourself against yourself,  
And will henceforward rather die than  
doubt'

And Enid could not say one tender  
word,  
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart  
She only pray'd him, 'Fly, they will  
return

And slay you, fly, your charger is with-  
out,  
My palfrey lost ' 'Then, Enid, shall you  
ride  
Behind me ' 'Yea, said Enid, 'let us go '  
And moving out they found the stately  
horse,  
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,  
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,  
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came,  
and stoop'd  
With a low whinny toward the pair and  
she  
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,  
Glad also, then Geraint upon the horse  
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his  
foot  
She set her own and climb'd, he turn'd  
his face  
And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast  
her arms  
About him, and at once they rode away

And never yet, since high in Paradise  
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,  
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind  
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous  
hour  
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's  
heart,  
And felt him hers again she did not  
weep,  
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy  
mist  
Like that which kept the heart of Eden  
green  
Before the useful trouble of the rain  
Yet not so misty were her meek blue  
eyes  
As not to see before them on the path,  
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,  
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his  
lance  
In rest, and made as if to fall upon him  
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of  
blood,  
She, with her mind all full of what had  
chanced,  
Shriek'd to the stranger 'Slay not a dead  
man ' '

'The voice of Enid,' said the knight,  
but she,  
Beholding it was Edyrin son of Nudd,  
Was moved so much the more, and  
shriek'd again,  
'O cousin, slay not him who gave you  
life '  
And Edyrin moving frankly forward spake  
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all  
love,  
I took you for a bandit knight of Doom,  
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon  
him,  
Who love you, Prince, with something  
of the love  
Wherewith we love the Heaven that  
chastens us  
For once, when I was up so high in pride  
That I was halfway down the slope to  
Hell,  
By overthrowing me you threw me higher  
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table  
Round,  
And since I know this Earl, when I my  
self  
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,  
I come the mouthpiece of our King to  
Doom  
(The King is close behind me) bidding  
him  
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,  
Submit, and hear the judgment of the  
King '

'He hears the judgment of the King  
of kings,'  
Cried the wan Prince, 'and lo, the  
powers of Doom  
Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,  
Where, huddled here and there on mound  
and knoll,  
Were men and women staring and aghast  
While some yet fled, and then he plain-ly  
told  
How the huge Earl lay slain within his  
hall  
But when the knight besought him,  
'Follow me,  
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's  
own ear

Speak what has chanced, ye surely have  
endured

Strange chances here alone,' that other  
flush'd,

And hung his head, and helted in reply,  
Fearing the mild face of the blameless  
King,

And after madness acted question ask'd  
Till Edyin crying, 'If ye will not go  
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'  
'Enough,' he said, 'I follow,' and they  
went

But Enid in their going had two fears,  
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,  
And one from Edyin. Every now and  
then,

When Edyin rein'd his charger at her side,  
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,  
From which old fies have broken, men  
may fear

Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said

'Fair and dear cousin, you that most  
had cause

To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed  
Yourself were first the blameless cause to  
make

My nature's piteous spark in the blood  
Break into furious flame, being repulsed  
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and  
wrought

Until I overtook him, then set up  
(With one main purpose ever at my heart)  
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour,  
Did her mock honour as the fairest fair,  
And, toppling over all antagonism,  
So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself  
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad  
And, but for my main purpose in these  
jousts,

I should have slain your father, seized  
yourself

I lived in hope that sometime you would  
come

To these my lists with him whom best  
you loved,

And there, poor cousin, with your meek  
blue eyes,

The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven,  
Behold me overturn and trample on him

Then, had you cried, or I felt, or pray'd  
to me,

I should not less have kill'd him. And  
you came,—

But once you came,—and with your own  
true eyes

Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one  
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow  
My proud self, and my purpose three  
years old,

And set his foot upon me, and gave me  
life

There was I broken down, there was I  
saved

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating  
the life

He gave me, meaning to be rid of it  
And all the penance the Queen laid upon  
me

Was but to rest awhile within her court,  
Where first as sullen as a beast new caged,  
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,  
Because I knew my deeds were known,  
I found,

Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,  
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,  
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace  
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began  
To glance behind me at my former life,  
And find that it had been the wolf's in  
deed

And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high  
saint,

Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,  
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,  
Which, when it weds with manhood,  
makes a man

And you were often there about the Queen,  
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw,  
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,  
But kept myself aloof till I was changed,  
And fear not, cousin, I am changed  
indeed'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,  
Like simple noble natures, credulous  
Of what they long for, good in friend or  
foe,

For he most in those who most have done  
them ill

And when they reach'd the camp the  
 King himself  
 Advanced to greet them, and beholding  
 her  
 Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a  
 word,  
 But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held  
 In converse for a little, and return'd,  
 And, gravely smiling, lifted her from  
 horse,  
 And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother  
 like,  
 And show'd an empty tent allotted her,  
 And glancing for a minute, till he saw her  
 Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and  
 said

'Prince, when of late ye pray'd me for  
 my leave  
 To move to your own land, and there  
 defend  
 Your marches, I was prick'd with some  
 reproof,  
 As one that let foul wrong stagnate and  
 be,  
 By having look'd too much thro' alien  
 eyes,  
 And wrought too long with delegated  
 hands,  
 Not used mine own but now behold me  
 come  
 To cleanse this common sewer of all my  
 realm,  
 With Edyrn and with others have ye  
 look'd  
 At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly  
 changed?  
 This work of his is great and wonderful  
 His very face with change of heart is  
 changed,  
 The world will not believe a man repents  
 And this wise world of ours is mainly  
 right  
 Full seldom doth a man repent, or use  
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious  
 quitch  
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,  
 And make all clean, and plant himself  
 afresh  
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart

As I will weed this land before I go  
 I, therefore, made him of our Table  
 Round,  
 Not rashly, but have proved him every  
 way  
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,  
 Sincere and most obedient and indeed  
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself  
 After a life of violence, seems to me  
 A thousand fold more great and wonderful  
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his  
 life,  
 My subject with my subjects under him,  
 Should make an onslaught single on a  
 realm  
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,  
 And were himself nigh wounded to the  
 death'

So spake the King, low bow'd the  
 Prince, and felt  
 His work was neither great nor wonderful,  
 And past to Enid's tent, and thither came  
 The King's own leech to look into his  
 hurt,  
 And Enid tended on him there, and there  
 Her constant motion round him, and the  
 breath  
 Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,  
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood  
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,  
 As the south west that blowing Bala lake  
 Fills all the sacred Dec So past the days

But while Geraint lay healing of his  
 hurt,  
 The blameless King went forth and cast  
 his eyes  
 On each of all whom Uther left in charge  
 Long since, to guard the justice of the  
 King  
 He look'd and found them wanting, and  
 as now  
 Men weed the white horse on the Berk  
 shire hills  
 To keep him bright and clean is hereto-  
 fore,  
 He rooted out the slothful officer  
 Of guilty, which for bibe had wink'd at  
 wrong,

And in their chaus set up a stronger race  
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men

To till the wastes, and moving everywhere  
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,  
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed  
the land

Then, when Geiant was whole again,  
they past  
With Arthui to Caeleon upon Usk  
There the great Queen once more embraced  
her friend,  
And clothed her in apparel like the day  
And tho' Geiant could never take again  
That comfort from their converse which  
he took  
Before the Queen's fair name was breathed  
upon,  
He rested well content that all was well  
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,  
And fifty knights rode with them to the  
shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own  
land

And there he kept the justice of the King  
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts  
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died  
And being ever foremost in the chase,  
And victor at the tilt and tournament,  
They call'd him the great Prince and man  
of men

But Enid, whom the ladies loved to call  
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named  
Enid the Good, and in their halls arose  
The cry of children, Ends and Geiants  
Of times to be, nor did he doubt her more,  
But rested in her fealty, till he crown'd  
A happy life with a fair death, and fell  
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea  
In battle, fighting for the blameless King

### MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

A STORM was coming, but the winds  
were still,  
And in the wild woods of Biocelande,  
Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old  
It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,  
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay

Whence came she? One that bare in  
bitter grudge  
The scorn of Arthui and his Table, Mark  
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering  
voice,

A minstrel of Caeleon by strong storm  
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say  
That out of naked knightlike purity  
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl  
But the great Queen herself, fought in her  
name,  
Swore by her—vows like theirs, that high  
in heaven  
Love most, but neither marry, nor are  
given  
In marriage, angels of our Lord's report

He ceased, and then—for Vivien  
sweetly said  
(She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark),  
'And is the fair example follow'd, Sir,  
In Arthui's household?'—answer'd innocently

'Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths  
that hold  
It more beseems the perfect virgin knight  
To worship woman as true wife beyond  
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden gill  
They place their pride in Lancelot and  
the Queen  
So passionate for an utter purity  
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these,  
For Arthui bound them not to singleness  
Bave hearts and clean and yet—God  
guide them—young'

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl  
his cup  
Straight at the speaker, but forbore—he  
rose  
To leave the hall, and, Vivien following  
him,  
Turn'd to her 'Here are snakes within  
the grass,  
And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear  
The monkish manhood, and the mask of  
pure  
Worn by this court, can stay them till they  
sung'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scorn-  
fully,  
'Why fear? because that foster'd at *thy*  
court  
I savour of thy—virtues? fear them? no  
As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out  
fear,  
So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out  
fear  
My father died in battle against the King,  
My mother on his corpse in open field,  
She bore me there, for born from death  
was I  
Among the dead and sown upon the  
wind—  
And then on thee! and shown the truth  
betimes,  
That old true filth, and bottom of the well,  
Where truth is hidden    Gracious lessons  
thine  
And maxims of the mud! "This Arthur  
pure!  
Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath  
made  
Gives him the lie! There is no being  
pure,  
My cherub, with not Holy Writ the  
same?"—  
If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood  
Thy blessing, stunkless King! I bring  
thee back,  
When I have ferreted out their burrow  
ings,  
The hearts of all this Order in mine  
hand—  
Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,  
Peichance, one curl of Arthur's golden  
beard  
To me this narrow grizzled fork of thine  
Is cleaner fashion'd—Well, I loved thee  
first,  
That waips the wit!

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark  
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged  
Low in the city, and on a festal day  
When Guinevere was crossing the great  
hall  
Cast himself down, knelt to the Queen,  
and wail'd

'Why kneel ye there? What evil have  
ye wrought?  
Rise!' and the damsel bidden rise arose  
And stood with folded hands and down-  
ward eyes  
Of glancing corner, and all meekly said,  
'None wrought, but suffer'd much, an  
orphin maid!  
My father died in battle for thy King,  
My mother on his corpse—in open field,  
The saddest sounding wastes of Lyonesse—  
Poor wretch—no friend!—and now by  
Mark the King  
For that small chain of fortune mine,  
pursued—  
If any such be mine—I fly to thee  
Save, save me thou—Woman of women—  
thine  
The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of  
power,  
Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's  
own white  
Euth angel, stunkless bride of stunkless  
King—  
Help, for he follows! take me to thyself!  
O yield me shelter for mine innocency  
Among thy maidens!"

Hid her slow sweet eyes  
Flew tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose  
First on her hair's, while the Queen  
who stood  
All glittering like May sunshine on May  
leaves  
In green and gold, and plumed with green  
replied,  
'Perce, child! of overpraise and over-  
blame  
We choose the last    Our noble Arthur,  
him  
Ye scarce can overpraise, will hear and  
know  
Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—  
Well, we shall test thee faithful, but this  
hour  
We ride a hawking with Sir Lancelot  
He hath given us a fur falcon which he  
train'd,  
We go to prove it    Bide ye here the  
while'

She past, and Vivien murmur'd after  
 'Go!  
 I bide the while' Then thro' the portal-  
 aich  
 Peering askance, and muttering broken  
 wise,  
 As one that labours with an evil dream,  
 Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to  
 horse

'Is that the Lancelot' goodly—ay, but  
 grunt  
 Courteous—amends for gruntness—takes  
 her hand—  
 That glance of theirs, but for the street,  
 had been  
 A clinging kiss—how hand lingers in  
 hand!  
 Let go at last!—they ride away—to hawk  
 For waterfowl! Royaller game is mine  
 For such a supersensual sensual bond  
 As that gray cocklet chapt of at our  
 hearth—  
 Touch flax with flame—glance will seive  
 —the hairs!  
 Ah little it that borest in the dyke  
 Thy hole by night to let the boundless  
 deep  
 Down upon fu off cities while they  
 dance—  
 Or dream—of thee they dream'd not—  
 not of me  
 These—ay, but each of either ride, and  
 dream  
 The mortal dream that never yet was  
 mine—  
 Ride, ride and dream until ye wake—to  
 me!  
 Then, narrow court and lubber King,  
 farewell!  
 For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,  
 And our wise Queen, if knowing that I  
 know,  
 Will hate, loathe, fear—but honour me  
 the more'

Yet while they rode together down the  
 plain,  
 Then talk was all of training, terms of wit,  
 Diet and seeing, jesses, lash and lure

'She is too noble' he said 'to check at  
 pies,  
 Nor will she rake there is no baseness  
 in her'  
 Here when the Queen demanded as by  
 chance  
 'Know ye the stranger woman?' 'Let  
 her be,'  
 Said Lancelot and unhooded casting off  
 The goodly falcon free, she tower'd,  
 her bells,  
 Tone under tone, shrill'd, and they lifted  
 up  
 Then eager fices, wondering at the  
 strength,  
 Boldness and royal knighthood of the bud  
 Who pounced her quarry and slew it  
 Many a time  
 As once—of old—among the flowers—  
 they rode

But Vivien half forgotten of the Queen  
 Among her damscels brooding sat, heard,  
 watch'd  
 And whisper'd thro' the peaceful court  
 she crept  
 And whisper'd then as Arthur in the  
 highest  
 Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the  
 lowest,  
 Arriving at a time of golden rest,  
 And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,  
 While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,  
 And no quest came, but all was joust and  
 play,  
 Leaven'd his hall They heard and let  
 her be

Thereafter as an enemy that has left  
 Death in the living waters, and with  
 drawn,  
 The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court

She hated all the knights, and heard in  
 thought  
 Their lavish comment when her name  
 was named  
 For once, when Arthur walking all alone,  
 Vext at a rumour issued from himself  
 Of some corruption crept among his  
 knights,

Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fain,  
 Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy  
     mood  
 With reverent eyes mock loyal, shaken  
     voice,  
 And flutter'd adoration, and at last  
 With dark sweet hints of some who  
     prized him more  
 Than who should prize him most, at  
     which the King  
 Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by  
 But one had witch'd, and had not held  
     his peace  
 It made the laughter of an afternoon  
 That Vivien should attempt the blameless  
     King  
 And after that, she set herself to gun  
 Him, the most famous man of all those  
     times,  
 Merlin, who knew the range of all their  
     arts,  
 Had built the King his havens, ships,  
     and halls,  
 Was also Bard, and knew the starry  
     heavens,  
 The people call'd him Wizard, whom at  
     first  
 She play'd about with slight and sprightly  
     talk,  
 And vivid smiles, and furtly venom'd  
     points  
 Of slander, glancing here and grazing  
     there,  
 And yielding to his kinder moods, the  
     Seer  
 Would watch her at her petulance, and  
     play,  
 Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and  
     laugh  
 As those that watch a kitten, thus he  
     grew  
 Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and  
     she,  
 Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,  
 Began to break her sports with graver fits,  
 Turned of a pale, would often when they  
     met  
 Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him  
 With such a fixt devotion, that the old  
     man,

Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at  
     times  
 Would flatter his own wish in age for love,  
 And half believe her true for thus at  
     times  
 He waver'd, but that other clung to him,  
 Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went

Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy,  
 He walk'd with dreams and darkness,  
     and he found  
 A doom that ever poised itself to fall,  
 An ever moaning battle in the mist,  
 Would war of dying flesh against the life,  
 Death in all life and lying in all love,  
 The merriest having power upon the  
     highest,  
 And the high purpose broken by the  
     worm

So leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the  
     beach,  
 There found a little boat, and stepped into  
     it,  
 And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her  
     not  
 She took the helm and he the sul, the  
     boat  
 Drove with a sudden wind across the  
     deeps,  
 And touching Dieton sands, they dis-  
     embark'd  
 And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,  
 Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceland  
 For Merlin once had told her of a charm,  
 The which if any wrought on anyone  
 With woven paces and with waving arms,  
 The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie  
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,  
 From which was no escape for evermore,  
 And none could find that man for ever-  
     more,  
 Nor could he see but him who wrought  
     the charm  
 Coming and going, and he lay as dead  
 And lost to life and use and name and  
     fame  
 And Vivien ever sought to work the  
     charm  
 Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,



As fancying that her glory would be great  
According to his greatness whom she  
quenched

There lay she all her length and kiss'd  
his feet,  
As if in deepest reverence and in love  
A twist of gold was round her hair, a  
robe  
Of samite without price, that more exprest  
Than hid her, clung about her lissome  
limbs,  
In colour like the sun-shining palm  
On shallows in the windy gleams of March  
And while she kiss'd them, crying,  
'Triample me,  
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the  
world,  
And I will pray you worship, tread me  
down  
And I will kiss you for it,' he was mute  
So dark a forethought roll'd about his  
brain,  
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave  
The blind wave feeling round his long  
sea hall  
In silence wherefore, when she lifted up  
A face of red apparel, and spake and said,  
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again,  
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and once  
more,  
'Great Master, do ye love me?' he was  
mute  
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,  
Writhed toward him, slid up his knee  
and sat,  
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet  
Together, curved an arm about his neck,  
Clung like a snake, and letting her left  
hand  
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,  
Made with her right a comb of pearl to  
part  
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out  
Had left in ashes then he spoke and said,  
Not looking at her, 'Who are wise in love  
Love most, say least,' and Vivien an-  
swer'd quick,  
'I saw the little elf god eyeless once  
In Arthur's arched hall at Camelot

But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid  
child'

Yet you are wise who say it, let me think  
Silence is wisdom I am silent then,  
And ask no kiss,' then adding all at once,  
'And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,'  
drew

The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard  
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,  
And call'd himself a gilded summer fly  
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,  
Who meant to eat her up in that wild  
wood

Without one word So Vivien call'd  
herself,

But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star  
Veil'd in gray vapour, till he sadly  
smiled

'To what request for what strange boon,'  
he said,

'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,  
O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,  
For these have broken up my melancholy'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,  
'What, O my Master, have ye found  
your voice?

I bid the stranger welcome Thanks at  
last'

But yesterday you never open'd lip,  
Except indeed to drink no cup had we  
In mine own lady palms I call'd the  
spring

That gather'd tickling dropwise from  
the cleft,

And made a pretty cup of both my hands  
And offer'd you it kneeling then you  
drank

And knew no more, nor gave me one  
poor word,

O no more thanks than might a goat have  
given

With no more sign of reverence than a  
beard

And when we halted at that other well,  
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay  
Foot gilt with all the blossom dust of  
those

Deep meadows we had traversed, did  
you know

That Vivien bathed your feet before her  
own?

And yet no thanks and all thro' this  
wild wood

And all this morning when I fondled you  
Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so  
strange—

How had I wrong'd you? surely ye are  
wise,

But such a silence is more wise than  
kind'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers  
and said

'O did ye never lie upon the shore,  
And watch the curl'd white of the coming  
wave

Glass'd in the slippery sand before it  
breaks?

Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,  
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,  
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall  
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's  
court

To break the mood You follow'd me  
unask'd,

And when I look'd, and saw you follow-  
ing still,

My mind involved yourself the nearest  
thing

In that mind mist for shall I tell you  
truth?

You seem'd that wave about to break upon  
me

And sweep me from my hold upon the  
world,

My use and name and fame You pardon  
child

Your pretty spoils have bughten'd all  
again

And ask you boon, for boon I owe you  
thrice,

Once for wrong done you by confusion,  
next

For thanks it seems till now neglected,  
last

For these your dainty gambols wherefore  
ask,

And take this boon so strange and not so  
strange'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-  
fully

'O not so strange as my long asking it,  
Not yet so strange as you yourself are  
strange,

Nor half so strange as that dark mood of  
yours

I ever fear'd ye were not wholly mine,  
And see, yourself have own'd ye did me  
wrong

Let the people call you prophet let it be  
But not of those that can expound them  
selves

Take Vivien for expounder, she will call  
That three days long presageful gloom of  
yours

No presage, but the same mistrustful mood  
That makes you seem less noble than  
yourself,

Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,  
Now ask'd again for see you not, dear  
love,

That such a mood as that, which lately  
gloom'd

Your fancy when ye saw me following  
you,

Must make me fear still more you are not  
mine,

Must make me yearn still more to prove  
you mine,

And make me wish still more to learn  
this charm

Of woven prices and of waving hands,  
As proof of trust O Merlin, teach it me  
The charm so taught will charm us both  
to rest

For, grant me some slight power upon  
your fate,

I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,  
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you  
mine

And therefore be as great as ye are named,  
Not muffled round with selfish reticence  
How had you look and how demurely?

O, if you think this wickedness in me  
That I should prove it on you unwaried,  
That makes me passing wrathful, then  
our bond

Had best be loosed for ever but think  
or not,

By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean  
truth,  
As clean as blood of babes, as white as  
milk.

O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,  
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,  
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,  
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—  
May this hard earth cleave to the Nether  
hell

Down, down, and close again, and nip  
me fast,

If I be such a traitress Yield my boon,  
I'll which I scarce can yield you all I am,  
And grant my re-iterated wish,  
The great proof of your love because I  
think,

How ever wise, ye hardly know me yet '

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers  
and said,

'I never was less wise, however wise,  
Too curious Vivien, tho' you tell of trust,  
Than when I told you first of such a  
charm

Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,  
Too much I trusted when I told you that,  
And stung this vice in you which stung  
me

Thro' womankind in the first hour, for howsoever  
In children a great curiousness be well,  
Who have to learn themselves and all the  
world,

In you, that are no child, for still I find  
Your face is practised when I spell the  
lines,

I call it,—well, I will not call it vice  
But since you name yourself the summer  
fly,

I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,  
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back  
Settles, till one could yield for weariness.  
But since I will not yield to give you power  
Upon my life and use and name and fame,  
Why will ye never ask some other boon?  
Yea, by God's hood, I trusted you too much '

And Vivien, like the tenderest hearted  
maiden  
That ever bided tryst at village stile,

Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears  
'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your  
maid,

Guess her let her feel herself forgiven  
Who feels no heart to ask another boon  
I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme  
Of "trust me not at all or all in all"  
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,  
And it shall answer for me Listen to it

"In Love, if Love be Love, if Love  
be ours,  
Faith and unfaith can never be equal  
powers  
Unfaith in right is want of faith in all

"It is the little rift within the lute,  
That by and by will make the music mute,  
And ever widening slowly silence all

"The little rift within the lover's lute  
Or little pitted speck in guinea's fruit,  
That rotting inward slowly moulders all

"It is not worth the keeping let it go  
But shall it answer, darling, answer, no  
And trust me not at all or all in all "

O Master, do ye love my tender rhyme?'

And Merlin look'd and half believ'd  
her true,  
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,  
So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her  
tears

Like sunlight on the plum behind a  
shadow  
And yet he answer'd half indignantly

'For other was the song that once I  
heard

By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit  
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,  
To chase a creature that was current then  
In these wild woods, the hut with golden  
horns

It was the time when first the question  
rose

About the founding of a Table Round,  
That was to be, for love of God and man  
And noble deed, the flower of all the  
world

And each incited each to noble deeds  
 And while we waited, one, the youngest  
 of us,  
 We could not keep him silent, out he  
 flash'd,  
 And into such a song, such fire for fame,  
 Such trumpet blowings in it, coming down  
 To such a stein and non-clashing close,  
 That when he stopt we long'd to hurl  
 together,  
 And should have done it, but the beau-  
 teous beast  
 Scared by the noise upstart at our feet,  
 And like a silver shadow slipt away  
 Thro' the dim land, and all day long we  
 rode  
 Thio' the dim land against a rushing  
 wind,  
 That glorious roundel echoing in our  
 ears,  
 And chased the flashes of his golden horns  
 Until they vanish'd by the fairy well  
 That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—  
 Where children cast their pins and nails,  
 and cry,  
 "Laugh, little well!" but touch it with  
 a sword,  
 It buzzes fiercely round the point, and  
 there  
 We lost him such a noble song was that  
 But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet  
 rhyme,  
 I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,  
 Were proving it on me, and that I lay  
 And felt them slowly ebbing, name and  
 fame'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn  
 fully  
 'O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,  
 And all tho' following you to this wild  
 wood,  
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you  
 Lo now, what hearts have men! they  
 never mount  
 As high as woman in her selfless mood  
 And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my  
 song,  
 Take one verse more—the lady speaks it  
 —this

' "My name, once mine, now thine, is  
 closest mine,  
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame  
 were thine,  
 And shame, could shame be thine, that  
 shame were mine  
 So trust me not at all or all in all "

' Says she not well? and there is more  
 —this rhyme  
 Is like the fair pearl necklace of the  
 Queen,  
 That burst in dancing, and the pearls  
 were spilt,  
 Some lost, some stolen, some as relics  
 kept  
 But nevermore the same two sister pearls  
 Ran down the silken thread to kiss each  
 other  
 On her white neck—so is it with this  
 rhyme  
 It lives dispersedly in many hands,  
 And every minstrel sings it differently,  
 Yet is there one true line, the pearl of  
 pearls  
 "Man dreams of Fame while woman  
 wakes to love "  
 Yea! Love, tho' Love were of the gross  
 est, craves  
 A potion from the solid present, eats  
 And uses, craves of the rest, but Fame,  
 The time that follows death is nothing  
 to us,  
 And what is Fame in life but half dis-  
 fame,  
 And counterchanged with darkness? ye  
 yourself  
 Know well that Envy calls you Devil's  
 son,  
 And since ye seem the Master of all Art,  
 They fain would make you Master of all  
 vice'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and  
 said,  
 'I once was looking for a magic weed,  
 And found a fair young squire who sat  
 alone,  
 Had carved himself a knightly shield of  
 wood,  
 And then was painting on it fancied arms,

Azure, an Eagle using of, the Sun  
 In dexter chief, the scroll "I follow  
     fame"  
 And speaking not, but leaning over him,  
 I took his brush and blotted out the bird,  
 And made a Gardener putting in a graff,  
 With this for motto, "Rather use than  
     fame"  
 You should have seen him blush, but  
     afterwards  
 He made a stalwart knight O Vivien,  
 For you, methinks you think you love me  
     well,  
 For me, I love you somewhat, rest and  
     Love  
 Should have some rest and pleasure in  
     himself,  
 Not ever be too curious for a boon,  
 Too prudent for a proof against the grain  
 Of him ye say ye love but Fame with  
     men,  
 Being but ampler means to serve man  
     kind,  
 Should have small rest or pleasure in  
     himself,  
 But work is vassal to the larger love,  
 That dwarfs the petty love of one to one  
 Use give me Fame at first, and Fame  
     again  
 Increasing gave me use Lo, there my  
     boon!  
 What other? for men sought to prove me  
     vile,  
 Because I fain had given them greater  
     wits  
 And then did Envy call me Devil's son  
 The sick weak beast seeking to help her-  
     self  
 By striking at her better, miss'd, and  
     brought  
 Her own claw back, and wounded her  
     own heart  
 Sweet were the days when I was all un-  
     known,  
 But when my name was lifted up, the  
     storm  
 Drake on the mountain and I cared not  
     for it  
 Right well know I that Fame is half  
     disfame,

Yet needs must work my work That  
     other fame,  
 To one at least, who hath not children,  
     vague,  
 The cackle of the unborn about the grave,  
 I cared not for it a single misty star,  
 Which is the second in a line of stars  
 That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,  
 I never gazed upon it but I dreamt  
 Of some vast charm concluded in that star  
 To make fame nothing Wherefore, if I  
     fear,  
 Giving you power upon me thro' this  
     charm,  
 That you might play me falsely, having  
     power,  
 However well ye think ye love me now  
 (As sons of kings loving in pupilage  
 Have turn'd to tyrants when they came  
     to power)  
 I rather dread the loss of use than fame,  
 If you—and not so much from wickedness,  
 As some wild turn of anger, or a mood  
 Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,  
 To keep me all to your own self,—or else  
 A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—  
 Should try this chain on whom ye say ye  
     love'

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in  
     wraith  
 'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted  
     Good'  
 Well, hide it, hide it, I shall find it out,  
 And being found take heed of Vivien  
 A woman and not trusted, doubtless I  
 Might feel some sudden turn of anger born  
 Of your misfaith, and your fine epithet  
 Is accurate too, for this full love of mine  
 Without the full heart back may merit well  
 Your term of overstrain'd So used as I,  
 My daily wonder is, I love at all  
 And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?  
 O to what end, except a jealous one,  
 And one to make me jealous if I love,  
 Was this fair chain invented by yourself?  
 I well believe that all about this world  
 Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,  
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower  
 From which is no escape for evermore'

Then the grete Master meynly answer'd  
 hei  
 'Full many a love in loving youth was  
 mine,  
 I needed then no charm to keep them mine  
 But youth and love, and that full heart  
 of yours  
 Whereof ye prattle, may now assure you  
 mine,  
 So live uncharm'd For those who  
 wrought it first,  
 The wrist is pruted from the hand that  
 waved,  
 The feet unmoitised from their ankle-  
 bones  
 Who paced it, ages back but will ye heere  
 The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme'

'There lived a king in the most Eastern  
 East,  
 Less old than I, yet older, for my blood  
 Hath earnest in it of fair springs to be  
 A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,  
 Whose bark had plunder'd twenty name-  
 less isles,  
 And passing one, at the high pcep of  
 dawn,  
 He saw two cities in a thousand borts  
 All fighting for a woman on the sea  
 And pushing his black craft among them  
 all,  
 He lightly scatter'd thews and brought  
 hei off,  
 With loss of half his people arrow-shun,  
 A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,  
 They said a light came from hei when she  
 moved  
 And since the pirate would not yield her  
 up,  
 The King impaled him for his piracy,  
 Then made her Queen but those idle  
 nurtured eyes  
 Waged such unwilling tho' successful war  
 On all the youth, they sicken'd, counsels  
 thinn'd,  
 And armies waned, for magnet like she  
 drew  
 The rustiest iron of old fighters' heuts,  
 And beasts themselves would worship,  
 camels knelt

Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain  
 back  
 That carry kings in castles, bow'd black  
 knees  
 Of homage, ringing with their serpent  
 hands,  
 To make hei smile, hei golden ankle-bells  
 What wonder, being jealous, that he sent  
 His horns of proclamation out thro' all  
 The hundred under-kingdoms that he  
 sway'd  
 To find a wizard who might teach the King  
 Some charm, which being wrought upon  
 the Queen  
 Might keep hei all his own to such a one  
 He promised more than ever king has  
 given,  
 A league of mountain full of golden mines,  
 A province with a hundred miles of coast,  
 A palace and a princess, all for him  
 But on all those who tried and fail'd, the  
 king  
 Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning  
 by it  
 To keep the list low and pretenders back,  
 Or like a king, not to be trifled with—  
 Their heads should moulder on the city  
 gates  
 And many tried and fail'd, because the  
 charm  
 Of nature in hei overbore their own  
 And many a wizard blow bleach'd on the  
 walls  
 And many weeks a troop of cannon crows  
 Hung like a cloud above the gateway  
 towers'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said  
 'I sit and gather honey yet, methinks,  
 Thy tongue has tript a little ask thyself  
 I he lady never made *unwilling* war  
 With those fine eyes she had her pleasure  
 in it,  
 And made her good man jealous with good  
 cause  
 And lived there neither dame nor damsel  
 then  
 Wroth at a lover's loss? woe all as time,  
 I mean, as noble, as then Queen was fair?  
 Not one to flout a venom at her eyes,

Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,  
O! make her paler with a poison'd rose?  
Well, those were not our days but did  
they find  
A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?

She ceased, and made her lithe arm  
round his neck  
Tighten, and then drew back, and let her  
eyes  
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a  
bride's  
On her new lord, her own, the first of men

He answer'd laughing, 'Nay, not like  
to me  
At last they found—his foragers for  
chums—

A little glossy headed hairless man,  
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass,  
Read but one book, and ever reading  
grew

So grated down and filed away with  
thought,  
So lean his eyes were monstrous, while  
the skin

Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and  
spine

And since he kept his mind on one sole  
aim,

Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted  
flesh,

Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall  
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting  
men

Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,  
And heard their voices talk behind the  
wall,

And learnt their elemental secrets, powers  
And forces, often o'er the sun's bright eye  
Drew the vast eyelid of an ink cloud,  
And hush'd it at the base with slanting  
storm,

O! in the noon of mist and driving rain,  
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood  
sigh'd,

And the crum'd mountain was a shadow,  
sunn'd

The world to peace again here was the  
man

And so by force they dragg'd him to the  
King

And then he taught the King to charm  
the Queen

In such wise, that no man could see her  
more,

Nor saw she save the King, who wrought  
the charm,

Coming and going, and she lay as dead,  
And lost all use of life but when the King  
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,  
The province with a hundred miles of coast,  
The palace and the princess, that old man  
Went back to his old wild, and lived on  
grass,

And vanish'd, and his book came down  
to me'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily  
'Ye have the book the charm is written  
in it

Good take my counsel let me know it  
at once

For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,  
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd  
thirty fold,

And whelm all this beneath as vast a  
mound

As after furious battle turfs the slum  
On some wild down above the windy deep,  
I yet should strike upon a sudden means  
To dig, pick, open, find and read the  
charm

Then, if I tired it, who should blame me  
then?

And smiling as a master smiles at one  
That is not of his school, nor any school  
But that where blind and naked Ignorance  
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,  
On all things all day long, he answer'd her

'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien'  
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,  
But every page having an ample margin,  
And every margin enclosing in the midst  
A square of text that looks a little blot,  
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas,  
And every square of text an awful charm,  
Writ in a language that has long gone by  
So long, that mountains have arisen since

With cities on then flanks—thou read the book !

And every margin scribbled, crost, and clamm'd

With comment, densest condensation, hard  
To mind and eye, but the long sleepless nights

Of my long life have made it easy to me  
And none can read the text, not even I,  
And none can read the comment but myself,

And in the comment did I find the charm  
O, the results are simple, & mere child  
Might use it to the hum of anyone,  
And never could undo it ask no more  
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,  
But keep that oath ye swore, ye might,  
perchance,

Assay it on some one of the Table Round,  
And all because ye dream they babble of  
you'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger,  
said

'What dare the full-fed liars say of me ?  
*They* ride abroad redressing human  
wrongs !

They sit with knife in meat and wine in  
horn !

*They* bound to holy vows of chastity !  
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale  
But you are man, you well can understand  
The shame that cannot be explain'd for  
shame

Not one of all the drove should touch me  
swine !'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her  
words

'You breathe but accusation vast and  
vague,

Spleen-born, I think, and proofless If  
ye know,

Set up the charge ye know, to stand or  
fall !'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrath  
fully

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him  
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his  
wife

And two fair babes, and went to distant  
lands,

Was one year gone, and on returning found  
Not two but three ? there lay the reckling,  
one

But one hour old ! What said the happy  
sire ?

A seven months' babe had been a truer gift  
Those twelve sweet moons confused his  
fatherhood'

Then answer'd Merlin, 'Nay, I know  
the tale

Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame  
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from  
his wife

One child they had it lived with her  
she died

His kinsman travelling on his own affair  
Was charged by Valence to bring home  
the child

He brought, not found it therefore take  
the truth'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'overtrue & tale  
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagamore,  
That ardent man ? "to pluck the flower  
in season,"

So says the song, "I trow it is no treason"  
O Master, shall we call him overquick  
To crop his own sweet rose before the  
hour ?'

And Merlin answer'd, 'Overquick art  
thou

To catch a loathly plume fall'n from the  
wing

Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole  
prey

Is man's good name he never wrong'd  
his bride

I know the tale An angry gust of wind  
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-  
room'd

And many-corridor'd complexities  
Of Arthur's palace then he found a door,  
And darkling felt the sculptured ornament  
That wreathen round it made it seem his  
own,

And wearied out made for the couch and  
slept,



A stainless man beside a stainless maid,  
And either slept, nor knew of other there,  
Till the high dawn piercing the loyal rose  
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely  
down,

Blushing upon them blushing, and at once  
He rose without a word and parted from  
her

But when the thing was blazed about the  
court,

The brute world howling forced them into  
bonds,

And as it chanced they are happy, being  
pure'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely  
too

What say ye then to fur Sir Percivale  
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,  
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of  
Christ,

O! some black wether of St Satan's fold  
What, in the precincts of the chapel yard,  
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,  
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her  
charge,

'A sober man is Percivale and pure,  
But once in life was fluster'd with new  
wine,

Then paced for coolness in the chapel-  
yard,

Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught  
And meant to stamp him with her master's  
mark,

And that he sinn'd is not believable,  
For, look upon his face—but if he sinn'd,  
The sin that practice burns into the blood,  
And not the one dark hour which brings  
remorse,

Will bind us, after, of whose fold we be  
O! else were he, the holy king, whose  
hymns

Are chanted in the minster, wiser than all  
But is your spleen flieth'd out, or have ye  
more?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in  
wrath

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend

Traitor or true? that commence with the  
Queen,

I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,  
O! whisper'd in the corner? do ye know  
it?'

To which he answer'd sadly, 'Yea, I  
know it

So Lancelot went ambassador, at first,  
To fetch her, and she watch'd him from  
her walls

A rumour runs, she took him for the King,  
So fix her fancy on him let them be  
But have ye no one word of loyal praise  
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless  
man?'

She answer'd with a low and chuckling  
laugh

'Man' is he man at all, who knows and  
winks?

Sees what his fair bride is and does, and  
winks?

By which the good King means to blind  
himself,

And blinds himself and all the Table Round  
To all the foulness that they work. Myself  
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)  
The pretty, popular name such manhood  
earns,

Could call him the main cause of all their  
crime,

Yea, were he not crown'd King, coward,  
and fool'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing,  
said

'O true and tender! O my liege and  
King!

O selfless man and stainless gentleman,  
Who wouldst against thine own eye wit-  
ness fail

Have all men true and leal, all women  
pure,

How, in the mouths of base interpreters,  
From over fineness not intelligible

To things with every sense as false and foul  
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle

street,  
Is thy white blamelessness accounted  
blame!'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne  
By instance, recommenced, and let her  
tongue

Rage like a fire among the noblest names,  
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,  
Defaming and defacing, till she left  
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad  
clean

Her words had issue other than she  
will'd

He diagg'd his eyebrow bushes down,  
and made

A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,  
And mutter'd in himself, 'Tell *her* the  
cham'

So, if she had it, would she rail on me  
To snare the next, and if she have it not  
So will she rail What did the wanton cry?  
"Not mount as high," we scarce can sink  
as low

For men at most differ as Heaven and  
earth,

But women, worst and best, as Heaven  
and Hell

I know the Table Round, my friends of  
old,

All brave, and many generous, and some  
chaste

She cloaks the scum of some repulse with  
lies,

I well believe she tempted them and fail'd,  
Being so bitter for fine plots may fail,  
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as vice  
With colours of the heart that are not theirs  
I will not let her know nine tithes of  
times

Face flatterer and backbiter are the same  
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a  
crime

Are prone to it, and impute themselves,  
Wanting the mental range, or low desire  
Not to feel lowest makes them level all,  
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the  
plain,

To leave an equal baseness, and in this  
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find  
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,  
Not grieving that their greatest are so  
small,

Inflate themselves with some insane  
delight,

And judge all nature from her feet of clay,  
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see  
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual  
fire,

And touching other worlds I am weary  
of her'

He spoke in words past heard, in  
whispers past,

Half suffocated in the hoary fell  
And many winter'd fleece of throat and  
chin

But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his  
mood,

And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or  
thrice,

Leapt from her session on his lap, and  
stood

Stiff as a viper frozen, loathsome sight,  
How from the rosy lips of life and love,  
Flush'd the blue-grinning skeleton of  
death'

White was her cheek, sharp breaths of  
anger puff'd

Her fury nostril out, her hand half  
clench'd

Went filtering sideways downward to her  
belt,

And feeling, had she found a dagger  
there

(For in a wink the false love turns to  
hate)

She would have stabb'd him, but she  
found it not

His eye was calm, and suddenly she took  
To bitter weeping like a hearten child,

A long, long weeping, not consolable  
Then her false voice made wry, broken  
with sobs

'O crueller than was ever told in tale,  
Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!  
O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,  
Or seeming shameful—for what shame in  
love,

So love be true, and not as yours is—  
nothing

Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust

Who call'd her what he call'd her—all  
her crime,  
All—all—the wish to prove him wholly  
hers'

She mused a little, and then clapt her  
hands  
Together with a wailing shriek, and said  
'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to  
the heart'  
Seethed like the kid in its own mother's  
milk'  
Kill'd with a word worse than a life of  
blows'  
I thought that he was gentle, being great  
O God, that I had loved a smaller man!  
I should have found in him a greater  
heart  
O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw  
The knights, the court, the King, dark  
in your light,  
Who loved to make men darker than they  
are,  
Because of that high pleasure which I  
had  
To seat you sole upon my pedestal  
Of worship—I am answer'd, and hence  
forth  
The course of life that seem'd so flowery  
to me  
With you for guide and master, only you,  
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken  
short,  
And ending in a ruin—nothing left,  
But into some low cave to crawl, and  
there,  
If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,  
Kill'd with unutterable unkindness'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung  
her head,  
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the  
braid  
Slept and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh  
And the dark wood grew darker toward  
the storm  
In silence, while his anger slowly died  
Within him, till he let his wisdom go  
For ease of heart, and half believed her  
true

Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,  
'Come from the storm,' and having no  
reply,  
Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the  
face  
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or  
shame,  
Then thence essay'd, by tenderest touching  
terms,  
To seek her ruffled peace of mind, in  
vain  
At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,  
And as the cageling newly flown returns,  
The seeming injured simple hearted thing  
Came to her old perch back, and settled  
there  
There while she sat, half falling from his  
knees,  
Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw  
The slow tear creep from her closed eye  
lid yet,  
About her, more in kindness than in love,  
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm  
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,  
Her arms upon her breast across, and  
stood,  
A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,  
Upbraid and flush'd before him then she  
said

'There must be now no passages of love  
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore,  
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,  
What should be granted which your own  
gross heart  
Would reckon worth the taking? I will  
go  
In truth, but one thing now—better have  
died  
Thrice than have ask'd it once—could  
make me stay—  
That proof of trust—so often ask'd in  
vain'  
How justly, after that vile term of yours,  
I find with grief! I might believe you  
then,  
Who knows? once more Lo! what was  
once to me  
Mere matter of the fancy, now hath grown  
The vast necessity of heart and life

Farewell, think gently of me, for I fear  
 My fate or folly, passing greyer youth  
 For one so old, must be to love thee still  
 But ere I leave thee let me swear once  
     more  
 That if I schemed against thy peace in  
     this,  
 May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er  
     me, send  
 One flash, that, missing all things else,  
     may make  
 My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie'

Scarcely had she ceased, when out of  
     heaven a bolt  
 (For now the storm was close above them)  
     struck,  
 Furlowing a giant oak, and javelining  
 With darted spikes and splinters of the  
     wood  
 The dark earth round. He raised his  
     eyes and saw  
 The tree that shone white listed thro' the  
     gloom  
 But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her  
     oath,  
 And dazzled by the livid flickering fork,  
 And deafen'd with the stammering cracks  
     and claps  
 That follow'd, flying back and crying out,  
 'O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,  
 Yet save me!' clung to him and hugg'd  
     him close,  
 And call'd him dear protector in her  
     fight,  
 Nor yet forgot her practice in her flight,  
 But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd  
     him close  
 The pale blood of the wizard at her touch  
 Took greyer colours, like an opal warm'd  
 She blam'd herself for telling hearsay  
     tales  
 She shook from fear, and for her fault  
     she wept  
 Of petulancy, she call'd him lord and  
     liege,  
 Her seer, her baird, her silver star of eve,  
 Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate  
     love  
 Of her whole life, and ever overhead

Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten  
     branch  
 Snapt in the rushing of the river run  
 Above them, and in change of glare and  
     gloom  
 Her eyes and neck glittering went and  
     came,  
 Till now the storm, its burst of passion  
     spent,  
 Morning and calling out of other lands,  
 Had left the ravaged woodland yet once  
     more  
 To peace, and what should not have been  
     had been,  
 For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,  
 Had yielded, told her all the chime, and  
     slept

Then, in one moment, she put forth  
     the chime  
 Of woven paces and of waving hands,  
 And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,  
 And lost to life and use and name and  
     fume

Then crying 'I have made his glory  
     mine,'  
 And shrieking out 'O fool!' the hylot  
     leapt  
 Adown the forest, and the thicket closed  
 Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool'

### LANCELOT AND ELAINE

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the lovable,  
 Elaine, the hily maid of Astolot,  
 High in her chamber up a tower to the  
     east  
 Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot,  
 Which first she placed where morning's  
     earliest ray  
 Might strike it, and awake her with the  
     gleam,  
 Then fearing rust or soiled fashion'd for it  
 A case of silk, and braided thereupon  
 All the devices blazon'd on the shield  
 In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,  
 A border fantasy of branch and flower,  
 And yellow throated nestling in the nest  
 Nor rested thus content, but dry by day,

Leaving her household and good father,  
climb'd  
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd  
her doo,  
Strip't off the case, and read the naked  
shield,  
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his  
arms,  
Now made a pretty history to herself  
Of every dint a sword had berten in it,  
And every scratch a lance had made  
upon it,  
Conjecturing when and where this cut  
is fresh,  
That ten years back, this dealt him at  
Caelyle,  
That at Caerleon, this at Camelot  
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was  
there!  
And here a thrust that might have kill'd,  
but God  
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his  
enemy down,  
And saved him so she lived in fantasy

How came the lily maid by that good  
shield  
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his  
name?  
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt  
For the great drumond in the drumond  
jousts,  
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that  
name  
Had named them, since a diamond was  
the prize

' For Arthur, long before they crown'd  
him King,  
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,  
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black  
tarn  
A honor lived about the tarn, and drove  
Like its own mists to all the mountain  
side  
For here two brothers, one a king, had  
met  
And fought together, but their names  
were lost,  
And each had slain his brother at a blow,

And down they fell and made the glen  
abhor'd  
And there they lay till all their bones  
were bleach'd,  
And lichen'd into colour with the crags  
And he, that once was king, had on a  
crown  
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside  
And Arthur came, and labouring up the  
pass,  
All in a misty moonshine, unawares  
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and  
the skull  
Blake from the nape, and from the skull  
the crown  
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rim  
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn  
And down the shingly scaur he plunged,  
and caught,  
And set it on his head, and in his heart  
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt  
be King'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the  
gems  
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them  
to his knights,  
Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I  
chanced  
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the  
King's—  
For public use henceforward let there be,  
Once every year, a joust for one of these  
For so by nine years' proof we needs  
must learn  
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves  
shall grow  
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive  
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule  
the land  
Hereafter, which God hinder' Thus he  
spoke  
And eight years past, eight jousts had  
been, and still  
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the  
year,  
With purpose to present them to the  
Queen,  
When all were won, but meaning all at  
once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon  
Worth half her realm, had never spoken  
word

Now for the central diamond and the  
last  
And largest, Arthur, holding then his  
court  
Hard on the inner high the place which  
now

Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust  
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh  
Sprake (for she had been sick) to Guine  
vere,

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot  
move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she  
said, 'ye know it'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the  
great deeds

Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,  
A sight ye love to look on' And the  
Queen

Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly  
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the  
King

He thinking that he read her meaning  
there,

'Stay with me, I am sick, my love is  
more

Than many diamonds,' yielded, and a  
heart

Love loyal to the last wish of the Queen  
(However much he yearn'd to make  
complete

The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)  
Urged him to speak against the truth,  
and say,

'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly  
whole,

And lets me from the saddle,' and the  
King

Glanced first at him, then her, and went  
his way

No sooner gone than suddenly she began

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot,  
much to blame'

Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the  
knights

Are half of them our enemies, and the  
crowd

Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones,  
who take

Their pastime now the trustful King is  
gone!"

Then Lancelot vent at having lied in vain  
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,  
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved  
me first

Then of the crowd ye took no more account  
I than of the myriad cricket of the mead,  
When its own voice clings to each blade  
of grass,

And every voice is nothing As to  
knights,

Them surely can I silence with all ease  
But now my loyal worship is allow'd

Of all men many a lord, without offence,  
Has link'd our names together in his lay,  
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guine  
vere,

The pearl of beauty and our knights at  
feast

Have pledged us in this union, while the  
King

Would listen smiling How then? is  
there more?

Has Arthur spoken right? or would  
yourself,

Now weary of my service and devotion,  
Henceforth be true to your faultless lord?

She broke into a little scornful laugh  
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless  
King,

That passionate perfection, my good  
lord—

But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?  
He never spoke word of reproach to me,

He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,  
He cares not for me only here to die

Here glim'd a vague suspicion in his  
eyes

Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with  
him—else

Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,  
And swearing men to vows impossible,

To make them like himself but, friend,  
to me

He is all fault who hath no fault at all  
For who loves me must have a touch of  
earth,  
The low sun makes the colour I am yours,  
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the  
bond  
And therefore hear my words go to the  
jousts  
The tiny trumpeting grut can break our  
dream  
When sweetest, and the vermin voices here  
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but  
they sting'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of  
knights  
'And with what face, after my pretext  
made,  
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I  
Before a King who honours his own  
word,  
As if it were his God's?'

'Yes,' said the Queen,  
'A mortal child without the craft to rule,  
Else had he not lost me but listen to me,  
If I must find you wit we hear it said  
That men go down before your spear at  
a touch,  
But knowing you are Lancelot, your great  
name,  
This conquers hide it therefore, go  
unknown  
Win! by this kiss you will and our true  
king  
Will then allow your pretext, O my  
knight,  
As all for glory, for to speak him true,  
Ye know right well, how meek soever he  
seem,  
No keener hunter after glory breathes  
He loves it in his knights more than  
himself  
They prove to him his work won and  
return'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,  
With at himself Not willing to be  
known,  
He left the barren beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the  
rare foot,  
And there among the solitary downs,  
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way,  
Till as he traced a faintly shadow'd track,  
That all in loops and links among the  
dales  
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw  
Fled from the west, far on a hill, the  
towers  
Thither he made, and blew the gateway  
horn  
Then came an old, dumb, myriad  
winkled man,  
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd  
And Lancelot movell'd at the wordless  
man,  
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat  
With two strong sons, Sir Toire and Sir  
Lavaune,  
Moving to meet him in the castle court,  
And close behind them stept the hily maid  
Elaine, his daughter mother of the house  
There was not some light just among  
them rose  
With laughter dying down as the great  
knight  
Approach'd them then the Lord of  
Astolat  
'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by  
what name  
Livest between the lips? for by thy state  
And presence I might guess thee chief of  
those,  
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls  
Him have I seen the rest, his table  
Round,  
Known as they are, to me they are un  
known'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of  
knights  
'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and  
known,  
What I by mere mischance have brought,  
my shield  
But since I go to joust as one unknown  
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,  
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the  
shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,  
Blank, or at least with some device not  
mine'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here  
is Torre's  
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre  
And so, God wot, his shield is blank  
enough

His ye can have' Then added plain Sir  
Torre,

'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have  
it'

Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir  
Churl,

Is that an answer for a noble knight?

Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger  
here,

He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,  
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an  
hour,

And set it in this damsel's golden hair,  
To make her thrice as wilful as before'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame  
me not

Before this noble knight,' said young  
Lavaine,

'For nothing' Surely I but play'd on  
Torre

He seem'd so sullen, next he could not go  
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden  
diermt

That some one put this diamond in her  
hand,

And that it was too slippery to be held,  
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,  
The castle well, behke, and then I said  
That if I went and if I fought and won it  
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)  
Then must she keep it safer! All was  
jest

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,  
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight  
Win shall I not, but do my best to win  
Young as I am, yet would I do my best'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd  
Lancelot,

Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship

O'er these waste downs whereon I lost  
myself,

Then were I glad of you as guide and  
friend

And you shall win this diamond,—as I  
hear

It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,  
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will'

'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir  
Torre,

'Such be for queens, and not for simple  
maids'

Then she, who held her eyes upon the  
ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,  
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement

Before the stranger knight, who, looking  
at her,

Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd  
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,

And only queens are to be counted so,  
Rash were my judgment then, who deem  
this maid

Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,  
Not violating the bond of like to like'

He spoke and ceased the lily maid  
Elaine,

Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,  
Lifted her eyes, and read his innerments

The great and guilty love he bare the  
Queen,

In battle with the love he bare his lord,  
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere  
his time

Another sinning on such heights with one,  
The flower of all the west and all the  
world,

Had been the sleeker for it but in him  
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose

And drove him into wastes and solitudes  
For agony, who was yet a living soul

Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest  
man

That ever among ladies ate in hall,  
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes

However marr'd, of more than twice her  
years,

Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the  
cheek,



And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up  
her eyes  
And loved him, with that love which was  
her doom

Then the great knight, the darling of  
the court,  
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall  
Stept with all grace, and not with half  
disdain

Had under grace, as in a smaller time,  
But kindly man moving among his kind  
Whom they with meats and vintage of  
their best

And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd  
And much they ask'd of court and Table  
Round,

And ever well and readily answer'd he  
But Lancelot, when they glanced at  
Guinevere,

Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,  
Heard from the Baron that, ten years  
before,

The heathen caught and reft him of his  
tongue

'He leant and wun'd me of their fierce  
design

Against my house, and him they caught  
and maim'd,

But I, my sons, and little daughter fled  
From bonds or death, and dwelt among  
the woods

By the great river in a boatman's hut  
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur  
broke

The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lorraine  
said, *rept*

By all the sweet and sudden passion of  
youth

Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have  
fought

O tell us—for we live apart—you know  
Of Arthur's glorious wais' And Lancelot  
spoke

And answer'd him at full, as having been  
With Arthur in the fight which all day long  
Rang by the white mouth of the violent  
Glen,

And in the four loud battles by the shore  
Of Dugl's, that on Bassa, then the war  
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy  
skits

Of Celidon the forest, and again  
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious  
King

Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,  
Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun  
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he  
breathed,

And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,  
When the strong neighings of the wild  
white Horse

Set every gilded parapet shuddering,  
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,  
And down the waste sand shores of Tlath  
Terror,

Where many a heathen fell, 'and on the  
mount

Of Badon I myself beheld the King  
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,  
And all his legions crying Christ and him,  
And break them, and I saw him, after,  
stand

High on a heap of slain, from spurs to  
plume

Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,  
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,  
'They are broken, they are broken!'  
for the King,

However mild he seems at home, not cares  
For triumph in our mimic wais, the  
jousts—

For if his own knight cast him down, he  
lugs

Saying, his knights are better men than  
he—

Yet in this heathen war the fire of God  
Fills him I never saw his like there lives  
No greater leader'

While he utter'd this,  
Low to her own heart sud the lily maid,  
'Save you great self, fair lord,' and  
when he fell

From talk of war to traits of pleasant—  
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—  
She still took note that when the living  
smile

Died from his lips, across him came a cloud  
Of melancholy severe, from which again,  
Whenever in her hovering to and fro  
The lily maid had striven to make him  
cheer,

There broke a sudden beaming tenderness  
Of manners and of nature and she  
thought

That all was nature, all, perchance, for her  
And all night long his face before her lived,  
As when a painter, poring on a face,  
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man  
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,  
The shape and colour of a mind and life,  
Lives for his children, ever at its best  
And fullest, so the face before her lived,  
Dark splendid, speaking in the silence,  
full

Of noble things, and held her from her  
sleep

Till rith she rose, half cheated in the  
thought

She needs must bid farewell to sweet  
Lorraine

First as in fear, step after step, she stole  
Down the long tower stairs, hesitating  
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the  
court,

'This shield, my friend, where is it?'  
and Lorraine

Past mused, as she came from out the  
tower

There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,  
and smooth'd

The glossy shoulder, humming to himself  
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she  
drew

Nearer and stood He look'd, and more  
amazed

Than if seven men had set upon him, saw  
The maiden standing in the dewy light  
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful  
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,  
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood  
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's  
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,  
That he should wear her favour at the tilt  
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it  
'Fair lord, whose name I know not—  
noble it is,

I well believe, the noblest—will you wear  
My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said  
he,

'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn  
Favour of any lady in the lists

Such is my wont, as those, who know me,  
know'

'Yet, so,' she answer'd, 'then in wearing  
mine

Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble  
lord,

That those who know should know you'  
And he turn'd

Her counsel up and down within his mind,  
And found it true, and answer'd, 'True,  
my child

Well, I will wear it fetch it out to me  
What is it?' and she told him 'A red  
sleeve

Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it  
then he bound

Her to him on his helmet, with a smile  
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much  
For any maiden living,' and the blood  
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with  
delight,

But left her all the praler, when Lorraine  
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd  
shield,

His brother's, which he gave to Lancelot,  
Who putted with his own to win Elaine

'Do me this grace, my child, to have my  
shield

In keeping till I come' 'A grace to me,'  
She answer'd, 'twice to day I am your  
squire'

Whereat Lorraine said, laughing, 'Lily  
maid,

For few our people call you lily maid  
In earnest, let me bring your colour back,  
Once, twice, and thrice now get you  
hence to bed'

So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own  
hand,

And thus they moved away she stay'd  
a minute,

Then made a sudden step to the gate,  
and there—

Her bright hair blown about the serious  
face

Yet rosy kindled with her brother's kiss—  
 Paused by the gateway, standing near  
 the shield  
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms  
 far-off  
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs  
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took  
 the shield,  
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy

Meanwhile the new companions past  
 away  
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless  
 downs,  
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived  
 a knight  
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years  
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and  
 pray'd,  
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself  
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall  
 On massive columns, like a shore-cliff cave,  
 And cells and chambers all were fair  
 and dry,  
 The green light from the meadows under  
 neath  
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs,  
 And in the meadow's tremulous aspen trees  
 And poplars made a noise of falling  
 shadows  
 And thither wending there that night they  
 bode

But when the next day broke from  
 underground,  
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the  
 cave,  
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and  
 rode away  
 Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold  
 my name  
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the  
 Lake,'  
 Abash'd Lorraine, whose instant revel-  
 ence,  
 Dearer to true young hearts than their  
 own praise,  
 But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it  
 indeed?'  
 And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'

At last he got his breath and answer'd,  
 'One,  
 One have I seen—that other, our liege  
 lord,  
 The dead Pendragon, Britain's King of  
 kings,  
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,  
 He will be there—then were I stricken  
 blind  
 That minute, I might say that I had seen'

So spake Lorraine, and when they  
 reach'd the lists  
 By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes  
 Run thro' the peopled gallery which half  
 round  
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,  
 Until they found the clear faced King,  
 who sat  
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,  
 Since to his crown the golden dragon  
 clung,  
 And down his robe the dragon writhed  
 in gold,  
 And from the carved work behind him  
 crept  
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to  
 make  
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of  
 them  
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innum-  
 erable  
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they  
 found  
 The new design wherein they lost them-  
 selves,  
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work  
 And, in the costly canopy over him set,  
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless  
 king

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lorraine  
 and said,  
 'Me you call great mine is the inner  
 secret,  
 The true lance but there is many a youth  
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am  
 And overcome it, and in me there dwells  
 No greatness, save it be some far off touch  
 Of greatness to know well I am not great

There is the man ' And Lavaine gaped  
 upon him  
 As on a thing miraculous, and anon  
 The trumpets blew, and then did either  
 side,  
 They that assail'd, and they that held the  
 lists,  
 Set lance in rest, strike spurs, suddenly  
 move,  
 Meet in the midst, and there so furiously  
 Shock, that a man far off might well  
 perceive,  
 If any man that day were left afield,  
 The hard earth shake, and a low thunder  
 of arms  
 And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw  
 Which were the weaker, then he hui'd  
 into it  
 Against the stronger little need to speak  
 Of Lancelot in his glory ' King, duke,  
 earl,  
 Count, baron—whom he smote, he over  
 threw

But in the field were Lancelot's kith  
 and kin,  
 Ranged with the Table Round that held  
 the lists,  
 Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger  
 knight  
 Should do and almost overdo the deeds  
 Of Lancelot, and one said to the other,  
 'Lo '  
 What is he? I do not mean the force  
 alone—  
 The grace and versatility of the man '  
 Is it not Lancelot? ' When has Lance  
 lot worn  
 Favour of any lady in the lists?  
 Not such his wont, as we, that know him,  
 know '  
 'How then? who then?' a fury seized  
 them all,  
 A fiery family passion for the name  
 Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs  
 They couch'd their spears and prick'd their  
 steeds, and thus,  
 Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind  
 they made  
 In moving, all together down upon him

Bore, as a wild wave in the wide North sea,  
 Green glimmering toward the summit,  
 bears, with all  
 Its stormy crests that smoke against the  
 skies,  
 Down on a bairn, and overbears the bairn,  
 And him that helms it, so they overbore  
 Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear  
 Down glancing lamed the charger, and a  
 spear  
 Prick'd shaply his own cuissas, and the  
 head  
 Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt,  
 and remain'd

Then Sir Lavaine did well and wor  
 shipfully,  
 He bore a knight of old repute to the  
 earth,  
 And brought his horse to Lancelot where  
 he lay  
 He up the side, sweating with agony, got,  
 But thought to do while he might yet  
 endure,  
 And being lustily holpen by the rest,  
 His party,—tho' it seem'd half miracle  
 To those he fought with,—drew his kith  
 and kin,  
 And all the Table Round that held the  
 lists,  
 Back to the barrier, then the trumpets  
 blew  
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the  
 sleeve  
 Of sables, and the pearls, and all the  
 knights,  
 His party, cried 'Advance and take thy  
 prize  
 The diamond,' but he answer'd, 'Diamond  
 me  
 No diamonds ' for God's love, a little air '  
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death '  
 Hence will I, and I charge you, follow  
 me not '

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from  
 the field  
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove  
 There from his charger down he slid, and  
 sat,

Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance  
head'  
'Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said  
Lavaine,  
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die'  
But he, 'I die already with it draw—  
Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir  
Lancelot gave  
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly  
groan,  
And half his blood burst forth, and down  
he sank  
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd  
away  
Then came the hermit out and bore him  
in,  
There stanch'd his wound, and there, in  
daily doubt  
Whether to live or die, for many a week  
hid from the wide world's rumour by the  
grove  
Of poplars with their noise of falling  
showers,  
And ever-tremulous aspen trees, he lay  
  
But on that day when Lancelot fled the  
lists,  
His party, knights of utmost North and  
West,  
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate  
isles,  
Came round their great Pendragon, saying  
to him,  
'Lo, sire, our knight, thro' whom we  
won the day,  
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left  
his prize  
Untaken, crying that his prize is death'  
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that  
such an one,  
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—  
He seem'd to me another Lancelot—  
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lance-  
lot—  
He must not pass uncared for Where-  
fore, rise,  
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the  
knight  
Wounded and wearied needs must he be  
near

I charge you that you get at once to horse  
And, knights and kings, there breathes  
not one of you  
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly  
given  
His prowess was too wondrous We will  
do him  
No customary honour since the knight  
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,  
Ourselves will send it after Rise and take  
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,  
And bring us where he is, and how he  
fares,  
And cease not from your quest until ye  
find'

So saying, from the craven flower above,  
To which it made a restless heart, he took,  
And gave, the diamond then from where  
he sat  
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,  
With smiling face and frowning heart, a  
Prince  
In the mid night and flourish of his May,  
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair  
and strong,  
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and  
Geraunt  
And Gareth, a good knight, but there-  
withal  
Sir Modied's brother, and the child of Lot,  
Not often loyal to his word, and now  
With that the King's command to sally  
forth  
In quest of whom he knew not, made him  
leave  
The banquet, and concourse of knights  
and kings

So all in wrath he got to horse and  
went,  
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in  
mood,  
Past, thinking 'Is it Lancelot who hath  
come  
Despite the wound he spake of, all for  
gain  
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,  
And add'n away to die?' So fear'd the  
King,

And, after two days' tariance there,  
 return'd  
 Then when he saw the Queen, embrac-  
 ing ask'd,  
 'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay,  
 lord,' she said  
 'And where is Lancelot?' Then the  
 Queen amazed,  
 'Was he not with you? won he not your  
 prize?'  
 'Nay, but one like him' 'Why that like  
 was he'  
 And when the King demanded how she  
 knew,  
 Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted  
 from us,  
 Than Lancelot told me of a common  
 talk  
 That men went down before his spear at  
 a touch,  
 But knowing he was Lancelot, his great  
 name  
 Conquer'd, and therefore would he hide  
 his name  
 From all men, ev'n the King, and to this  
 end  
 Had made the pretext of a hindering  
 wound,  
 That he might joust unknown of all, and  
 learn  
 If his old prowess were in right decay'd,  
 And added, "Our true Arthur, when he  
 learns,  
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain  
 Of pure glory"

Then replied the King  
 'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,  
 In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,  
 To have trusted me as he hath trusted  
 thee  
 Surely his King and most familiar friend  
 Might well have kept his secret True,  
 indeed,  
 Albeit I know my knights fantastical,  
 So fine a fear in our large Lancelot  
 Must needs have moved my laughter  
 now remains  
 But little cause for laughter his own  
 kin—

Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him,  
 this —  
 His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon  
 him,  
 So that he went sore wounded from the  
 field  
 Yet good news too for goodly hopes are  
 mine  
 That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart  
 He wore, against his wont, upon his helm  
 A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great  
 pearls,  
 Some gentle maiden's gift'

'Yea, lord,' she said,  
 'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that,  
 she choked,  
 And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,  
 Past to her chamber, and there flung  
 herself  
 Down on the great King's couch, and  
 writhed upon it,  
 And clench'd her fingers till they bit the  
 palm,  
 And shriek'd out 'Traitor' to the un-  
 heaving wall,  
 Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose  
 again,  
 And moved about her palace, proud and  
 pale

Gawain the while thro' all the region  
 round  
 Rode with his diamond, warned of the  
 quest,  
 Touch'd at all points, except the poplar  
 grove,  
 And came at last, tho' late, to Astolur  
 Whom glittering in enunell'd arms the  
 maid  
 Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from  
 Camelot, lord?'  
 'What of the knight with the red sleeve?'  
 'He won'  
 'I knew it,' she said 'But parted from  
 the jousts  
 Hunt in the side,' whereat she caught her  
 breath,  
 Tho' her own side she felt the sharp  
 lance go,

Thereon she smote her hand wellnigh  
 she swoon'd  
 And, while he gazed wonderingly at her,  
 came  
 The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the  
 Prince  
 Reported who he was, and on what quest  
 sent, that he bore the prize and could not  
 find  
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random  
 round  
 To seek him, and had wearied of the  
 search  
 To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with  
 us,  
 And ride no more at random, noble  
 Prince'  
 Here was the knight, and here he left a  
 shield,  
 This will he send or come for further  
 more  
 Our son is with him, we shall hear anon,  
 Needs must we hear ' To this the cour-  
 teous Prince  
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,  
 Courtesy with a touch of truth in it,  
 And stay'd, and cast his eyes on fair  
 Elaine  
 Where could be found face daintier? then  
 her shape  
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—  
 again  
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd  
 'Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for  
 me!'  
 And oft they met among the garden yews,  
 And there he set himself to play upon her  
 With silying wit, free flashes from a  
 height  
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,  
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden elo-  
 quence  
 And amorous adulation, till the maid  
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, 'Prince,  
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,  
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,  
 Whence you might learn his name? Why  
 slight your King,  
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and  
 prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,  
 Who lost the helm we slept her at, and  
 went  
 To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine  
 head,' said he,  
 'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,  
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes,  
 But an ye will it let me see the shield'  
 And when the shield was brought, and  
 Gawain saw  
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with  
 gold,  
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh,  
 and mock'd  
 'Right was the King! our Lancelot!  
 that true man!'  
 'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily,  
 'I,  
 Who deem'd my knight the greatest  
 knight of all'  
 'And if I deem'd,' said Gawain, 'that  
 you love  
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo,  
 ye know it!'  
 Speak therefore shall I waste myself in  
 vain?  
 Full simple was her answer, 'What know  
 I?  
 My brethren have been all my fellow  
 ship,  
 And I, when often they have talk'd of  
 love,  
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they  
 talk'd,  
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not, so  
 myself—  
 I know not if I know what true love is,  
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,  
 I know there is none other I can love'  
 'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love  
 him well,  
 But would not, knew ye what all others  
 know,  
 And whom he loves?' 'So be it,' cried  
 Elaine,  
 And lifted her fair face and moved away  
 But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a  
 little!  
 One golden minute's grace! he wore  
 your sleeve

Would he break faith with one I may not  
name?

Must our true man change like a leaf at  
last?

Nay—like enow why then, fai be it  
from me

To coss our mighty Lancelot in his  
loves'

And, damsel, for I deem you know full  
well

Where your great knight is hidden, let  
me leave

My quest with you, the diamond also  
here'

For if you love, it will be sweet to give it,  
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it  
From your own hand, and whether he  
love or not,

A diamond is a diamond Fare you well  
A thousand times!—a thousand times  
farewell'

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we  
two

May meet at court hereafter there, I  
think,

So ye will learn the courtesies of the  
court,

We two shall know each other'

Then he gave,  
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he  
gave,

The diamond, and all wearied of the  
quest

Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he  
went

A true love ballad, lightly rode away

Thence to the court he past, there told  
the King

What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is  
the knight'

And added, 'Sue, my liege, so much I  
learnt,

But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all  
round

The region but I lighted on the maid  
Whose sleeve he wore, she loves him,  
and to her,

Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,

I gave the diamond she will render it,  
For by mine head she knows his hiding-  
place'

The seldom frowning King frown'd,  
and replied,

'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more  
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget  
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings'

He spake and parted Wioth, but all  
in awe,

For twenty strokes of the blood, without  
a word,

Linger'd that other, staring after him,  
Then shook his hair, stode off, and  
buzz'd abroad

About the maid of Astolat, and her love  
All ears were pick'd at once, all tongues  
were loosed

'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lance-  
lot,

Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat'  
Some read the King's face, some the  
Queen's, and all

Had marvel what the maid might be, but  
most

Piedoom'd her as unworthy One old  
dame

Came suddenly on the Queen with the  
sharp news

She, that had heard the noise of it  
before,

But sorrowing Lancelot should have  
stoop'd so low,

Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tran-  
quillity

So ran the tale like fire about the court,  
Fire in dry stubble a nine days' wonder  
flued

Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or  
thrice

Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the  
Queen,

And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid  
Smiled at each other, while the Queen,  
who sat

With lips severely placid, felt the knot  
Climb in her throat, and with her feet  
unseen



Crush'd the wild passion out against the  
floor  
Beneath the banquet, where the meats  
became  
As wormwood, and she hated all who  
pledged

But far away the maid in Astolat,  
Hei guiltless rival, she that ever kept  
The one day-seen Sir Lancelot in her  
heart,  
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,  
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face  
and said,  
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault  
Is yours who let me have my will, and  
now,  
Sweet father, will you let me lose my  
wits?'  
'Nay,' said he, 'surely' 'Wherefore,  
let me hence,'  
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear  
Lavaune'  
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear  
Lavaune  
Bide,' answer'd he 'we needs must hear  
anon  
Of him, and of that other' 'Ay,' she  
said,  
'And of that other, for I needs must hence  
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,  
And with mine own hand give his diamond  
to him,  
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest  
As yon proud Prince who left the quest  
to me  
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams  
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
Death pale, for lack of gentle maiden's  
aid  
The gentle-born the maiden, the more  
bound,  
My father, to be sweet and serviceable  
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know  
When these have worn their tokens let  
me hence  
I play you' Then her father nodding  
said,  
'Ay, ay, the diamond wit ye well, my  
child,

Right fain were I to learn this knight  
were whole,  
Being our greatest yea, and you must  
give it—  
And sure I think this fruit is hung too  
high  
For any mouth to gape for save a  
queen's—  
Nay, I mean nothing so then, get you  
gone,  
Being so very wilful you must go'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slept away,  
And while she made her ready for her  
ride,  
Her father's latest word humm'd in her  
ear,  
'Being so very wilful you must go,'  
And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,  
'Being so very wilful you must die'  
But she was happy enough and shook it  
off,  
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us,  
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,  
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'  
Then far away with good Sir Torre for  
guide  
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless  
downs  
To Camelot, and before the city gates  
Came on her brother with a happy face  
Making a roan horse caper and curvet  
For pleasure all about a field of flowers  
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaune' she  
cried, 'Lavaune,  
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He  
amazed,  
'Torre and Elaine' why here? Sir  
Lancelot'  
How know ye my lord's name is Lance  
lot?'  
But when the maid had told him all her  
tale,  
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his  
moods  
Left them, and under the strange-statued  
gate,  
Where Arthur's was were render'd  
mystically,  
Past up the still rich city to his kin,

His own far blood, which dwelt at  
Camelot,  
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove  
Led to the caves there first she saw the  
casque  
Of Lancelot on the wall her scut  
sleeve,  
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls  
away,  
Stream'd from it still, and in her heart  
she hugh'd,  
Because he had not loosed it from his  
helm,  
But meant once more perchance to tour-  
ney in it  
And when they gain'd the cell wherein  
he slept,  
His battle writhen arms and mighty hands  
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream  
Of dragging down his enemy made them  
move  
Then she that saw him lying unsleek,  
unshorn,  
Grunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry  
The sound not wonted in a place so still  
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd  
his eyes  
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him,  
saying,  
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the  
King'  
His eyes glisten'd she fancied 'Is it for  
me?'  
And when the maid had told him all the  
tale  
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent,  
the quest  
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt  
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,  
And laid the diamond in his open hand  
Her face was near, and as we kiss the  
child  
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her  
face  
At once she slept like water to the floor  
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied  
you  
Rest must you have' 'No rest for me,'  
she said,

'Nay, for now you, fair lord, I am at rest'  
What might she mean by that? his huge  
black eyes,  
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon  
her,  
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself  
In the heart's colours on her simple face  
And Lancelot look'd and was perplex'd in  
mind,  
And being weak in body said no more,  
But did not love the colour, woman's  
love,  
Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd  
Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the  
fields,  
And past beneath the weirdly sculptured  
gates  
Far up the dim rich city to her kin,  
There bode the night but woke with  
dawn, and past  
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,  
Thence to the cave so day by day she  
past  
In either twilight ghost like to and fro  
Gliding, and every day she tended him,  
And likewise many a night and Lancelot  
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little  
hurt  
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at  
times  
Brain furious in his heart and agony,  
seem  
Uncounteous, even he but the meek  
maid  
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him  
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,  
Milder than any mother to a sick child,  
And never woman yet, since man's first  
fall,  
Did kinder unto man, but her deep love  
Upbore her, till the hermit, skill'd in all  
The simples and the science of that time,  
Told him that her fine care had saved his  
life  
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,  
Would call her friend and sister, sweet  
Elaine,  
Would listen for her coming and regret

Her parting step, and held her tenderly,  
And loved her with all love except the  
love  
Of man and woman when they love their  
best,  
Closest and sweetest, and had died the  
death  
In any knightly fashion for her sake  
And peradventure had he seen her first  
She might have made this and that other  
world  
Another world for the sick man, but now  
The shackles of an old love straiten'd  
him,  
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true

Yet the great knight in his mid sick-  
ness made  
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve  
These, as but born of sickness, could not  
live  
For when the blood ran lustier in him  
again,  
Full often the bright image of one face,  
Making a treacherous quit in his heart,  
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud  
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly  
grace  
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd  
not,  
Or short and coldly, and she knew right  
well  
What the rough sickness meant, but what  
this meant  
She knew not, and the sorrow dumb'd  
her sight,  
And drive her ere her time across the  
fields  
Full into the rich city, where alone  
She mused, 'Vain, in vain it cannot  
be  
He will not love me how then? must  
I die?'  
Then as a little helpless innocent bud,  
That has but one plum passage of few  
notes,  
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er  
For all an April morning, till the ear  
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid

Went half the night repeating, 'Must I  
die?'  
And now to right she turn'd, and now to  
left,  
And found no ease in turning or in rest,  
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd,  
'death or him,'  
Again and like a burden, 'Him or death'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt  
was whole,  
To Astolat returning rode the three  
There moan by moan, arraying her sweet  
self  
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd  
her best,  
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she  
thought  
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,  
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall'  
And Lancelot ever prest upon the mud  
That she should ask some goodly gift of  
him  
For her own self or his, 'and do not  
shun  
To speak the wish most new to your true  
heart,  
Such service have ye done me, that I make  
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord  
am I  
In mine own land, and what I will I can'  
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,  
But like a ghost without the power to  
speak  
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her  
wish,  
And bode among them yet a little space  
Till he should learn it, and one moan it  
chanced  
He found her in among the garden yews,  
And said, 'Dely no longer, speak your  
wish,  
Seemg I go to day' then out she brake  
'Going' and we shall never see you more  
And I must die for want of one bold word'  
'Speak that I live to hear,' he said, 'is  
yours'  
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke  
'I have gone mad I love you let me  
die'

'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'

And innocently extending her white arms,  
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be  
your wife'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen  
to wed,

I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine  
But now there never will be wife of mine'  
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be  
wife,

But to be with you still, to see your face,  
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the  
world'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world,  
the world,

All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart  
To interpret ear and eye, and such a  
tongue

To blare its own interpretation—nay,  
Full ill then should I quit your brother's  
love,

And your good father's kindness' And  
she said,

'Not to be with you, not to see your face—  
Alas for me then, my good days are done'  
'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten  
times nay'

This is not love but love's first flash in  
youth,

Most common yea, I know it of mine  
own self

And you yourself will smile at your own  
self

Hereafter, when you yield your flower of  
life

To one more fitly yours, not thrice you  
age

And then will I, for true you are and  
sweet

Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,  
More specially should you good knight  
be poor,

Endow you with broad land and territory  
Even to the half my realm beyond the  
seas,

So that would make you happy further  
more,

Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my  
blood,

In all your quarrels will I be your knight  
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,  
And more than this I cannot'

While he spoke  
She neither blush'd nor shook, but  
deathly pale  
Stood grasping what was nearest, then  
replied

'Of all this will I nothing,' and so fell,  
And thus they bore her swooning to her  
tower

Then spake, to whom thro' those black  
walls of yew

Their talk had pierced, her father 'Ay,  
a flash,

I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead  
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot  
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy  
To blunt or break her passion'

Lancelot said,  
'That were against me what I can I  
will,'

And there that day remain'd, and toward  
even

Sent for his shield full meekly rose the  
maid,

Stuport off the case, and gave the naked  
shield,

Then, when she heard his horse upon the  
stones,

Unclasp'd flung the casement back, and  
look'd

Down on his helm, from which her sleeve  
had gone

And Lancelot knew the little clinking  
sound,

And she by tact of love was well aware  
That Lancelot knew that she was looking  
at him

And yet he glanced not up, nor waved  
his hand,

Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away  
This was the one discourtesy that he used

So in her tower alone the maiden sat  
His very shield was gone, only the case,  
Her own poor work, her empty labour,  
left

But still she heard him, still his picture  
form'd  
And grew between her and the pictured  
wall  
Then came her father, saying in low tones,  
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted  
quietly  
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace  
to thee,  
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all  
calm  
But when they left her to herself again,  
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant  
field  
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd,  
the owls  
Wailing had power upon her, and she  
melt  
Her fancies with the sorrow-lifted glooms  
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind

And in those days she made a little  
song,  
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love  
and Death,'  
And sang it sweetly could she make  
and sing

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain,  
in vain,  
And sweet is death who puts an end to  
pain  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter  
death must be  
Love, thou art bitter, sweet is death to  
me  
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die

'Sweet love, that seems not made to  
fade away,  
Sweet death, that seems to make us love  
less clay,  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I

'I fain would follow love, if that could  
be,  
I needs must follow death, who calls for  
me,  
Call and I follow, I follow 'let me die'

III

High with the last line scaled her voice,  
and this,  
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind  
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,  
and thought  
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of  
the house  
That ever shrinks before a death,' and  
call'd  
The father, and all three in hurry and fear  
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light  
of dawn  
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let  
me die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we  
know,  
Repeating, till the word we know so well  
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,  
So dwelt the father on her face, and  
thought  
'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,  
Then gave a languid hand to each, and  
lay,  
Speaking a still good morrow with her  
eyes  
At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yester  
night  
I seem'd a curious little maid again,  
As happy as when we dwelt among the  
woods,  
And when ye used to take me with the  
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat  
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape  
That has the poplar on it there ye fixt  
Your limit, oft returning with the tide  
And yet I cried because ye would not pass  
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood  
Until we found the palace of the King  
And yet ye would not, but this night I  
dream'd  
That I was all alone upon the flood,  
And then I said, "Now shall I have my  
will"

And there I woke, but still the wish  
remain'd  
So let me hence that I may pass at last  
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,  
Until I find the palace of the King

IV

There will I enter in among them all,  
 And no man there will dare to mock at  
 me,  
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at  
 me,  
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse  
 at me,  
 Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to  
 me,  
 Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me  
 one  
 And there the King will know me and  
 my love,  
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,  
 And all the gentle court will welcome me,  
 And after my long voyage I shall rest."

"Peace," said her father, "O my child,  
 ye seem  
 Light headed, for what force is yours to  
 go  
 So far, being sick? and wherefore would  
 ye look  
 On this proud fellow again, who scorns  
 us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave  
 and move,  
 And bluster into stormy sobs and say,  
 "I never loved him nor I met with  
 him,  
 I care not howsoever great he be,  
 Then will I strike at him and strike him  
 down,  
 Give me good fortune, I will strike him  
 dead,  
 For this discomfort he hath done the  
 house."

To whom the gentle sister made reply,  
 "Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be  
 wioth,  
 Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault  
 Not to love me, than it is mine to love  
 Him of all men who seems to me the  
 highest."

"Highest?" the father answer'd, echoing  
 "highest?"  
 (He meant to break the passion in her)  
 "nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the  
 highest,  
 But this I know, for all the people know it,  
 He loves the Queen, and in an open shame  
 And she returns his love in open shame,  
 If this be high, what is it to be low?"

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat  
 "Sweet father, all too fount and sick am I  
 For anger these are slanders never yet  
 Was noble man but made ignoble talk  
 He makes no friend who never made a foe  
 But now it is my glory to have loved  
 One peerless, without stain so let me  
 pass,

My father, howsoever I seem to you,  
 Not all unhappy, having loved God's best  
 And greatest, tho' my love had no return  
 Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,  
 Thanks, but you work against your own  
 desire,

For if I could believe the things you say  
 I should but die the sooner, wherefore  
 care,

Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man  
 Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and  
 die."

So when the ghostly man had come and  
 gone,  
 She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,  
 Besought him to write as she desired  
 A letter, word for word, and when he  
 ask'd

"Is it for I Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?"  
 Then will I bear it gladly," she replied,  
 "For Lancelot and the Queen and all the  
 world,

But I myself must bear it." Then he wrote  
 The letter she devised, which being writ  
 And folded, "O sweet father, tender and  
 true,

Deny me not," she said—"ye never yet  
 Denied my fancies—thus, however strange,  
 My latest lay the letter in my hand  
 A little ere I die, and close the hand  
 Upon it, I shall guard it even in death  
 And when the heart is gone from out my  
 heart,

Then take the little bed on which I died

For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the  
Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen  
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it  
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier  
To take me to the river, and a barge  
Be ready on the river, clothed in black  
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen  
There surely I shall speak for mine own  
self,

And none of you can speak for me so well  
And therefore let our dumb old man alone  
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he  
Will guide me to that palace, to the  
doors'

She ceased her father promised,  
whereupon  
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her  
death

Was rather in the fantasy than the blood  
But ten slow mornings past, and on the  
eleventh

Her father laid the letter in her hand,  
And closed the hand upon it, and she died  
So that day there was dole in Astolat

But when the next sun broke from  
underground,  
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent  
brows

Accompanying, the sad chariot bier  
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that  
shone

Full-summer, to that stream whereon the  
barge,

Pall'd all its length in blackest summe, lay  
Theresat the lifeliong creature of the house,  
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,  
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face  
So those two brethren from the chariot took  
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,  
Set in her hand a lily, over her hung  
The silken case with braced blazonings,  
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to  
her

'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again  
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears  
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the  
dead,

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with  
the flood—

In her right hand the lily, in her left  
The letter—all her bright hair streaming  
down—

And all the coverlid was cloth of gold  
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in  
white

All but her face, and that clear featured  
face

Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,  
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace  
craved

Audience of Guinevere, to give at last  
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,  
Hard won and hardly won with bruise and  
blow,

With deaths of others, and almost his  
own,

The nine-years fought-for diamonds for  
he saw

One of her house, and sent him to the  
Queen

Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen  
agreed

With such and so unmoved majesty  
She might have seem'd her statue, but  
that he,

Low drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her  
feet

For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye  
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,  
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the  
walls,

And parted, laughing in his courtly heart

All in an oriel on the summer side,  
Vine clad, of Arthur's palace toward the  
stream,

They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd,  
'Queen,

Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,  
Take, what I had not won except for you,  
These jewels, and make me happy, making  
them

An amulet for the roundest arm on earth,  
Or necklace for a neck to which the  
swan's

Is tawnier than her cygnet's these are  
words

Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin  
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it  
Words, as we grant grief tears Such sin  
in words

Perchance, we both can pardon but, my  
Queen,

I hear of rumours flying thro' your court  
Our bond, is not the bond of man and  
wife,

Should have in it an absolute trust  
To make up that defect let rumours be  
When did not rumours fly? these, as I  
trust

That you trust me in your own nobleness,  
I may not well believe that you believe'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away,  
the Queen

Broke from the vast oval embowering vine  
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them  
off,

Till all the place whereon she stood was  
green,

Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive  
hand

Received at once and laid aside the gems  
There on a table near her, and replied

'It may be, I am quicker of belief  
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the  
Lake

Our bond is not the bond of man and wife  
This good is in it, whatsoever of ill,  
It can be broken easier I for you  
This many a year have done despite and  
wrong

To one whom ever in my heart of hearts  
I did acknowledge nobler What are  
these?

Diamonds for me? they had been thine  
their worth

Being your gift, had you not lost your  
own

To loyal hearts the value of all gifts  
Must vary as the giver's Not for me!  
For her! for your new fancy Only this  
Grant me, I pray you have your joys  
apart

I doubt not that however changed, you  
keep

So much of what is graceful and myself  
Would shun to break those bounds of  
cousinesy

In which as Arthur's Queen I move and  
rule

So cannot speak my mind An end to  
this!

A strange one! yet I take it with Amen  
So play you, add my diamonds to her  
pearls,

Deck her with these, tell her, she shines  
me down

An amulet for an arm to which the  
Queen's

Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck  
O is much fairer—as a faith once fair  
Was richer than these diamonds—hers  
not mine—

Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,  
O! hers or mine, mine now to work my  
will—

She shall not have them'

Saying which she seized,  
And, thro' the casement standing wide  
for her,

Flung them, and down they flash'd, and  
smote the stream

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as  
it were,

Diamonds to meet them, and they past  
away

Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half  
disdain

At love, life, all things, on the window  
ledge,

Close underneath his eyes, and right  
across

Where these had fallen, slowly past the  
barge

Whereon the lily maid of Astolat  
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst  
away

To weep and wail in secret, and the  
barge,

On to the palace doorway sliding, paused



There two stood arm'd, and kept the  
door, to whom,  
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,  
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes  
that ask'd

'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard  
face,

As hard and still as is the face that men  
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken  
rocks

On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and  
they said,

'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,  
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen,  
so fair'

Yet, but how pale! what are they? flesh  
and blood?

O! come to take the King to Fairyland?  
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,  
But that he passes into Fairyland'

While thus they babbled of the King,  
the King

Came girt with knights then turn'd the  
tongueless man

From the half-face to the full eye, and  
rose

And pointed to the damsel, and the doors  
So Arthur had the meek Sir Percivale  
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the mud,  
And reverently they bore her into hall  
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd  
at her,

And Lancelot later came and mused at  
her,

And last the Queen herself, and pitied  
her

But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,  
Stooped, took, broke seal, and read it,  
this was all

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the  
Lake,

I, sometime call'd the mud of Astolat,  
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,  
Hither, to take my last farewell of you  
I loved you, and my love had no return,  
And therefore my true love has been my  
death

And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,

And to all other ladies, I make moan  
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial  
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,  
As thou art a knight peerless'

Thus he read,  
And ever in the reading, lords and dames  
Wept, looking often from his face who  
read

To hers which lay so silent, and at times,  
So touch'd were they, half thinking that  
her lips,

Who had devised the letter, moved again

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them  
all

'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that  
hear,

Know that for this most gentle maiden's  
death

Right heavy am I, for good she was and  
true,

But loved me with a love beyond all love  
In women, whomsoever I have known  
Yet to be loved makes not to love again,  
Not at my years, however it hold in youth  
I swear by truth and knighthood that I  
gave

No cause, not willingly, for such a love  
To this I call my friends in testimony,  
Her brethren, and her father, who himself  
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and  
use,

To break her passion, some discountesy  
Against my nature what I could, I did  
I left her and I bad her no farewell,  
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would  
have died,

I might have put my wits to some rough  
use,

And help'd her from herself'

Then said the Queen  
(Sea was her wrath, yet working after  
storm)

'Ye might at least have done her so  
much grace,

For lord, as would have help'd her from  
her death'

He rused his head, their eyes met and  
hers full,

He adding,  
 'Queen, she would not be content  
 Save that I wedded her, which could not  
 be  
 Then might she follow me thro' the world,  
 she ask'd,  
 It could not be I told her that her love  
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken  
 down  
 I to rise hereafter in a stiller flame  
 Toward one more worthy of her—then  
 would I,  
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor,  
 Estate them with large land and territory  
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow  
 seas,  
 To keep them in all joyance more than  
 this  
 I could not, this she would not, and she  
 died'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, 'O my  
 knight,  
 It will be to thy worship, as my knight,  
 And mine, as head of all our Fable Round,  
 To see that she be buried worshipfully'

So toward that shrine which then in  
 all the realm  
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went  
 The marshall'd Order of their Table  
 Round,

And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see  
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,  
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,  
 And mass, and rolling music, like a queen  
 And when the knights had laid her comely  
 head

Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,  
 Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let  
 her tomb

Be costly, and her image thereupon,  
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet  
 Be carved, and her lily in her hand  
 And let the story of her dolorous voyage  
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb  
 In letters gold and azure'' which was  
 wrought

Thereafter, but when now the lords and  
 dames

And people, from the high door stream  
 ing, brake  
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,  
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved  
 apart,  
 Diew near, and sigh'd in passing,  
 'Lancelot,

Forgive me, mine was jealousy in love'  
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,  
 'That is love's curse, pass on, my Queen,  
 forgiven'

But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,  
 Approach'd him, and with full affection  
 said,

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom  
 I live

Most joy and most reliance, for I know  
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,  
 And many a time have watch'd thee at  
 the tilt

Strike down the lusty and long practised  
 knight,

And let the younger and unskill'd go by  
 To win his honour and to make his name,  
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man  
 Made to be loved, but now I would to  
 God,

Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,  
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden,  
 shaped, it seems,

By God for thee alone, and from her face,  
 If one may judge the living by the dead,  
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,  
 Who might have brought thee, now a  
 lonely man

Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons  
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,  
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the  
 Lake'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fain she was,  
 my King,

Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be  
 To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,  
 To doubt her pureness were to want a  
 heart—

Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love  
 Could bind him, but false love will not be  
 bound'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said  
the King  
'Let love be free, free love is for the  
best  
And, after heaven, on our dull side of  
death,  
What should be best, if not so pure a love  
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee  
She fould to bind, tho' being, as I think,  
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but  
he went,  
And at the running of a little brook  
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd  
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes  
And saw the barge that brought her  
moving down,  
Far off, a blot upon the stream, and said  
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and  
sweet,  
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love  
Far tenderer than my Queen's Pray for  
thy soul?  
Ay, that will I Farewell too—now at  
last—  
Farewell, fair lady "Jealousy in love?"  
Not rather did love's harsh hen, jealous  
proud?  
Queen, if I grant the jealousy is of love,  
May not your crescent fear for name and  
fame  
Speak, as it waves, of a love that wanes?  
Why did the King dwell on my name to  
me?  
Mine own name shames me, seeming a  
reproach,  
I Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake  
Caught from his mother's arms—the  
wondrous one  
Who passes thro' the vision of the night—  
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns  
Hear'd on the winding waters, o'er and  
moor  
She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair,  
my child,  
As a king's son," and often in her arms  
She bore me, pacing on the dusky moor  
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er  
it be!

For what am I? what profits me my name  
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and  
have it  
Pleasure to have it, none, to lose it, pain,  
Now grown a part of me but what use in  
it?  
To make men wiser by making my sin  
known?  
O! sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?  
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man  
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must  
break  
These bonds that so defame me not  
without  
She wills it would I, if she will'd it? nay,  
Who knows? but if I would not, then  
may God,  
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down  
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,  
And fling me deep in that forgotten  
mere,  
Among the tumbled fragments of the  
hills?

So grown'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful  
pain,  
Not knowing he should die a holy man

## THE HOLY GRAIL

FROM noiseful aims, and acts of prowess  
done  
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,  
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd  
the Pure,  
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,  
Praise, fast, and alms, and leaving for  
the cowl  
The helmet in an abbey far away  
From Camelot, there, and not long after,  
died

And one, a fellow monk among the rest,  
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the  
rest,  
And honour'd him, and wrought into his  
heart  
A way by love that waken'd love within,  
To answer that which came and as they  
sat

Beneath a world old yew tree, darkening  
half

The cloisters, on a gustful April morn  
That puff'd the swaying branches into  
smoke

Above them, ere the summer when he  
died,

The monk Ambrosius question'd Per  
civale

'O brother, I have seen this yew tree  
smoke,  
Spring after spring, for half a hundred  
years

For never have I known the world with  
out,

Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale but  
thee,

When first thou camest—such a courtesy  
Spake tho' the limbs and in the voice—  
I knew

For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall,  
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,  
Some true, some light, but everyone of you  
Stamp'd with the image of the King, and  
now

Tell me, what drove thee from the Table  
Round,

My brother? was it earthly passion cost?'

'Nay,' said the knight, 'for no such  
passion mine

But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail  
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,  
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle  
out

Among us in the jousts, while women  
watch

Who wins, who falls, and waste the  
spiritual strength

Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven'

To whom the monk 'The Holy  
Grail'—I trust

We are green in Heaven's eyes, but here  
too much

We moulder—as to things without I  
mean—

Yet one of your own knights, a guest of  
ours,

Told us of this in our refectory,

But spake with such a sadness and so low  
We heard not half of what he said What  
is it?

The phantom of a cup that comes and  
goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd  
Percivale

'The cup, the cup itself, from which our  
Lord

Drank at the last sad supper with his  
own

This, from the blessed land of Aumat—  
After the day of darkness, when the dead  
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good  
saint

Aumathean Joseph, journeying brought  
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn  
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our  
Lord

And there awhile it bode, and if a man  
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at  
once,

By faith, of all his ills But then the times  
Grew to such evil that the holy cup  
Was caught away to Heaven, and dis  
appear'd'

To whom the monk 'From our old  
books I know

That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,  
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,  
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to  
build,

And there he built with wattles from the  
marsh

A little lonely church in days of yore,  
For so they say, these books of ours, but  
seem

Mute of this miracle, far as I have read  
But who first saw the holy thing to day?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a  
nun,

And one no further off in blood from me  
Than sister, and if ever holy maid  
With knees of adoration wore the stone,  
A holy maid, tho' never maiden glow'd,  
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,  
With such a fervent flame of human  
love,

Which being rudely blunted, glanced and  
shot

Only to holy things, to prayer and praise  
She gave herself, to fast and alms And  
yet,

Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,  
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,  
And the strange sound of an adulterous  
race,

Across the iron grating of her cell  
Bert, and she pray'd and fasted all the  
more

'And he to whom she told her sins, or  
what

Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,  
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,  
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,  
A legend handed down thro' five or six,  
And each of these a hundred winters old,  
From our Lord's time And when King  
Arthur made

His Table Round, and all men's hearts  
became

Clean for a season, surely he had thought  
That now the Holy Grail would come  
again,

But sin broke out Ah, Christ, that it  
would come,

And heal the world of all their wickedness!  
"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might  
it come

To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay,"  
said he,

"I know not, for thy heart is pure as  
snow"

And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun  
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and  
I thought

She might have risen and floated when I  
saw her

'For on a day she sent to speak with  
me

And when she came to speak, behold her  
eyes

Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,  
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,  
Beautiful in the light of holiness

And "O my brother Percivale," she said,

"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy  
Grail

For, waked at dead of night, I heard a  
sound

As of a silver horn from o'er the hills  
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's  
use

To hunt by moonlight,' and the slender  
sound

As from a distance beyond distance grew  
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,  
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch  
with hand,

Was like that music as it came, and then  
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver  
beam,

And down the long beam stole the Holy  
Grail,

Rose red with beatings in it, as if alive,  
Till all the white walls of my cell were  
died

With rosy colours leaping on the wall,  
And then the music faded, and the Grail  
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the  
walls

The rosy quiverings died into the night  
So now the Holy Thing is here again

Among us, brother, fast thou too and  
pray,

And tell thy brother knights to fast and  
pray,

That so perchance the vision may be seen  
By thee and those, and all the world be  
heal'd"

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake  
of this

To all men, and myself fasted and  
pray'd

Always, and many among us many a week  
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,  
Expectant of the wonder that would be

'And one there was among us, ever  
moved

Among us in white armour, Gralhbad  
"God make thee good as thou art beau-  
tiful,"

Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight,  
and none,

In so young youth, was ever made a knight  
Till Galahad, and this Galahad, when he heard  
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze,  
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd  
Heis, and himself her brother more than I

'Sister or brother none had he, but some  
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said  
Begotten by enchantment—chatteris they,  
Like buds of passage piping up and down,  
That gripe for flus—we know not whence they come,  
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away  
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair  
Which made a silken mat work for her feet,  
And out of this she plaited broad and long  
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread  
And crimson in the belt a strange device,  
A crimson grail within a silver beun,  
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,  
Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,  
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,  
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt  
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,  
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king  
Far in the spiritual city" and as she spake  
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes  
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind  
On him, and he believed in her belief

'Then came a year of miracle O brother,  
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,  
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,  
And carven with strange figures, and in and out  
The figures, like a serpent, run a scroll  
Of letters in a tongue no man could read  
And Merlin call'd it "The Siege perilous,"  
Perilous for good and ill, "for that," he said,  
"No man could sit but he should lose himself"  
And once by misadventure Merlin sat  
In his own chair, and so was lost, but he,  
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,  
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,  
While the great banquet lay along the hall,  
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard  
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,  
And rending, and a blast, and overhead  
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry  
And in the blast there smote along the hall  
A beam of light seven times more clear  
than day  
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail  
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,  
And none might see who bare it, and it past  
But every knight beheld his fellow's face  
As in a glory, and all the knights rose,  
And staring each at other like dumb men  
Stood, till I found a voice and swam a vow

'I swore a vow before them all, that I,  
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride  
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,  
Until I found and saw it, as the nun

My sister saw it, and Galahad swaie the  
vow,  
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,  
swaie,  
And Lancelot swaie, and many among  
the knights,  
And Gawain swaie, and louder than the  
rest'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, ask-  
ing him,  
'What said the King? Did Arthur take  
the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale,  
'the King,  
Was not in hall for early that same day,  
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,  
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall  
Crying on help for all her slurring harm  
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky  
aim  
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all  
she wore

Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn  
In tempest so the King arose and went  
To smoke the scound'rous hive of those  
wild bees

That made such honey in his realm  
Howbeit

Some little of this marvel he too saw,  
Returning o'er the plain that then began  
To darken under Camelot, whence the  
King

Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there!  
the roofs

Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder  
smoke'

Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the  
bolt"

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,  
As having there so oft with all his knights  
Feasted, and as the stateliest under  
heaven

'O brother, had you known our mighty  
hall,

Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!  
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,  
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,  
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,

By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing  
brook,

Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin  
built

And four great zones of sculpture, set  
betwixt

With many a mystic symbol, guard the hall  
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,  
And in the second men are slaying beasts,  
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,  
And on the fourth are men with growing  
wings,

And over all one statue in the mould  
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,  
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern  
Star

And eastward fronts the statue, and the  
crown

And both the wings are made of gold,  
and flame

At sunrise till the people in fair fields,  
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,  
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King"

'And, brother, had you known our hall  
within,

Broader and higher than any in all the  
lands'

Where twelve great windows blazon  
Arthur's wars,

And all the light that falls upon the board  
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of  
our King

Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,  
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount  
and mere,

Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur  
And also one to the west, and counter to it,  
And blank and who shall blazon it?  
when and how?—

O there, perchance, when all our wars are  
done,

The brand Excalibur will be cast away

'So to this hall full quickly rode the  
King,

In honor lest the work by Merlin wrought,  
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,  
wreapt

In unembraceful folds of rolling fire

And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw  
The golden dragon sparkling over all  
And many of those who burnt the hold,  
their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads gumed with  
smoke, and sear'd,

Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,  
Full of the vision, prest and then the  
King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"  
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some  
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is  
this?"

"O brother, when I told him what had  
chanced,

My sister's vision, and the rest, his face  
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than  
once,

When some brave deed seem'd to be done  
in vain,

Darken, and "Woe is me, my knights,"  
he cried,

"Had I been here, ye had not sworn  
the vow"

Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself  
been here,

My King, thou wouldst have sworn "  
"Yea, yea," said he,

"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the  
Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I  
saw the light,

But since I did not see the Holy Thing,  
I swear a vow to follow it till I saw"

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by  
knight, if any

Had seen it, all their answers were as  
one

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn  
our vows"

"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye  
seen a cloud?"

What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in  
a voice

Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,

"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,  
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—  
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me'"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the  
King, "for such

As thou art is the vision, not for these  
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—  
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—  
A sign to maim this Order which I made  
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"  
(Brother, the King was laid upon his  
knights)

"Talcassin is our fullest throat of song,  
And one hath sung and all the dumb will  
sing

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overcome  
Five knights at once, and every younger  
knight,

Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,  
Till overcome by one, he learns—and ye,  
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Per-  
civales"

(For thus it pleased the King to range  
me close

After Sir Galahad), "nay," said he,  
"but men

With strength and will to right the  
wrong'd, of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,  
Knights that in twelve great battles  
splash'd and dyed

The strong White Horse in his own  
heathen blood—

But one hath seen, and all the blind will  
see

Go, since your vows are sacred, being  
made

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my  
realm

Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my  
knights,

Your places being vacant at my side,  
This chance of noble deeds will come  
and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering  
fires

Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, ye  
most,

Return no more ye think I show myself



Too dark a prophet come now, let us  
meet  
The morrow morn once more in one full  
field  
Of gracious pastime, that once more the  
King,  
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may  
count  
The yet-unbroken strength of all his  
knights,  
Rejoicing in that Order which he made "

' So when the sun broke next from  
under ground,  
All the great table of our Arthur closed  
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,  
So many lances broken—never yet  
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur  
came ,  
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength  
Was in us from the vision, overthrew  
So many knights that all the people cried,  
And almost burst the barriers in their  
heat,  
Shouting, " Sir Galahad and Sir Perci-  
vale ! "

' But when the next day broke from  
under ground—  
O brother, had you known our Camelot,  
Built by old kings, age after age, so old  
The King himself had fears that it would  
fall,  
So strange, and rich, and dim, for where  
the roofs  
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,  
Met foreheads all along the street of those  
Who watch'd us pass, and lower, and  
where the long  
Rich galleries, lady loden, weigh'd the  
necks  
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,  
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers  
of flowers  
Fell as we past, and men and boys astride  
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,  
At all the corners, nam'd us each by  
name,  
Calling " God speed ! " but in the ways  
below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich  
and poor  
Wept, and the King himself could hardly  
speak  
For grief, and all in middle street the  
Queen,  
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd  
aloud,  
" This madness has come on us for our  
sins "  
So to the Gate of the three Queens we  
came,  
Where Arthur's ways are render'd mys-  
tically,  
And thence departed every one his way

' And I was lifted up in heart, and  
thought  
Of all my late shown prowess in the lists,  
How my strong lance had beaten down  
the knights,  
So many and famous names, and never  
yet  
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth  
so green,  
For all my blood danced in me, and I  
knew  
That I should light upon the Holy Grail

' Thereafter, the dark warning of our  
King,  
That most of us would follow wandering  
fires,  
Came like a driving gloom across my  
mind  
Then every evil word I had spoken once,  
And every evil thought I had thought of  
old,  
And every evil deed I ever did,  
Awoke and cried, " This Quest is not for  
thee "  
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself  
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,  
And I was thirsty even unto death,  
And I, too, cried, " This Quest is not for  
thee "

' And on I rode, and when I thought  
my thirst  
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then  
a brook,

With one sharp rapid, where the crisping  
white

Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,  
And took both ear and eye, and o'er the  
brook

Were apple trees, and apples by the brook  
Fallen, and on the lawns "I will rest  
here,"

I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest,"  
But even while I drank the brook, and ate  
The goodly apples, all these things at once  
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,  
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns

"And then behold a woman at a door  
Spinning, and fan the house whereby she  
sat,

And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,  
And all her bearing gracious, and she rose  
Opening her arms to meet me, as who  
should say,

"Rest here," but when I touch'd her,  
lo' she, too,

Fell into dust and nothing, and the house  
Became no better than a broken shed  
And in it a dead babe, and also this  
Fell into dust, and I was left alone

"And on I rode, and greater was my  
thirst

Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the  
world,

And where it smote the plowshare in the  
field,

The plowman left his plowing, and fell  
down

Before it, where it glitter'd on her paul,  
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell  
down

Before it, and I knew not why, but  
thought

"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen  
Then was I ware of one that on me moved  
In golden armour with a crown of gold  
About a casque all jewels, and his horse  
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere  
And on the splendour came, flashing me  
blind,

And seem'd to me the Lord of all the  
world,

Being so huge But when I thought he  
meant

To crush me, moving on me, lo' he, too,  
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he  
came,

And up I went and touch'd him, and he,  
too,

Fell into dust, and I was left alone  
And weeping in a land of sand and  
thorns

"And I rode on and found a mighty  
hill,

And on the top, a city wall'd the spires  
Pick'd with incredible pinnacles into  
heaven

And by the gateway stir'd a crowd, and  
these

Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Perci-  
vale!"

Thou mightiest and thou purest among  
men!"

And glad was I and clomb, but found at  
top

No man, nor any voice And thence I  
past

For tho' a ruinous city, and I saw  
That man had once dwelt there, but  
there I found

Only one man of an exceeding age

"Where is that goodly company," said I,  
"That so cried out upon me?" and he  
had

Scarce any voice to answer, and yet  
gasped,

"Whence and what art thou?" and even  
as he spoke

Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I  
Was left alone once more, and cried in  
grief,

"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself  
And touch it, it will crumble into dust"

"And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,  
Low as the hill was high, and where the  
vale

Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby  
A holy hermit in a hermitage,  
To whom I told my phantoms, and he  
said

"O son, thou hast not true humility,  
 The highest virtue, mother of them all,  
 For when the Lord of all things made  
     Himself  
 Naked of glory for His mortal change,  
 'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all  
     is thine,'  
 And all her form shone forth with sudden  
     light  
 So that the angels were amazed, and she  
 Follow'd Him down, and like a flying  
     star  
 Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east,  
 But her thou hast not known for what  
     is this  
 Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy  
     sins?  
 Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself  
 As Galahad." When the hermit made  
     an end,  
 In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone  
 Before us, and against the chapel door  
 Lud lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in  
     prayer  
 And there the hermit slaked my burning  
     thirst,  
 And at the raising of the mass I saw  
 The holy elements alone, but he,  
 "Saw ye no more?" I, Galahad, saw  
     the Grail,  
 The Holy Grail, descend upon the  
     shrine  
 I saw the fiery face as of a child  
 That smote itself into the bread, and went,  
 And hither am I come, and never yet  
 Hath what thy sister taught me first to  
     see,  
 This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor  
     come  
 Cover'd, but moving with me night and  
     day,  
 Fainter by day, but always in the night  
 Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd  
     marsh  
 Blood-red, and on the naked mountain  
     top  
 Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below  
 Blood-red. And in the strength of this  
     I rode,  
 Shattering all evil customs every where,

And past thro' Pagan realms, and made  
     them mine,  
 And clash'd with Pagan hoides, and bore  
     them down,  
 And broke thro' all, and in the strength  
     of this  
 Come victor. But my time is hard at  
     hand,  
 And hence I go, and one will crown me  
     king  
 Fair in the spiritual city, and come thou,  
     too,  
 For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling  
     on mine,  
 Drew me, with power upon me, till I  
     grew  
 One with him, to believe as he believed  
 Then, when the day began to wane, we  
     went

'There rose a hill that none but man  
     could climb,  
 Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-  
     courses—  
 Storm at the top, and when we gun'd it,  
     storm  
 Round us and death, for every moment  
     glanced  
 His silver fumes and gloom'd so quick  
     and thick  
 The lightnings here and there to left and  
     right  
 Struck, till the dry old trunks about us,  
     dead,  
 Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,  
 Sprang into fire and at the base we found  
 On either hand, as far as eye could see,  
 A great black swamp and of an evil smell,  
 Put black, put whiten'd with the bones  
     of men,  
 Not to be cross, save that some ancient  
     king  
 Had built a way, where, link'd with  
     many a bridge,  
 A thousand piers ran into the great Sea  
 And Galahad fled along them bidge by  
     bidge,  
 And every bidge as quickly as he cross'd

Spang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I  
yeand

To follow, and thence above him all the  
heavens

Open'd and blazed with thunder such as  
seem'd

Shoutings of all the sons of God and first  
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,  
In silver shining armour stann-clear,  
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung  
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud  
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,  
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came  
And when the heavens open'd and blazed  
again

Roaring, I saw him like a silver stai—  
And had he set the sail, or had the boat  
Become a living creature clad with wings?  
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung  
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,  
For now I knew the veil had been with  
drawn

Then in a moment when they blazed again  
Opening, I saw the least of little stairs  
Down on the waste, and strught beyond  
the star

I saw the spiritual city and all her spues  
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—  
No larger, tho' the gourd of all the suns—  
Strike from the sea, and from the stars  
there shot

A rose red sparkle to the city, and there  
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,  
Which never eyes on earth again shall see  
Then fell the floods of heaven downing  
the deep

And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge  
No memory in me lives, but that I touch'd  
The chapel-doors at dawn I know, and  
thence

Taking my way hiose from the holy man,  
Glad that no phantom vex'd me more,  
return'd

To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's  
wars'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for  
in sooth

These ancient books—and they would win  
thee—teem,

Only I find not there this Holy Grail,  
With miracles and marvels like to these,  
Not all unlike, which oftentime I read,  
Who read but on my breviary with ease,  
Till my head swims, and then go forth  
and pass

Down to the little thorp that lies so close,  
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest  
To these old walls—and mingle with our  
folk,

And knowing every honest face of theirs  
As well as ever shepheard knew his sheep,  
And every homely secret in their hearts,  
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,  
And ills and aches, and teetings, lyings  
in,

And muthful sayings, children of the place,  
That have no meaning half a league away  
Or lulling random squabbles when they  
rise,

Chaffings and chatterings at the market-  
cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world  
of mine,

Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—  
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,  
Came ye on none but phantoms in your  
quest,

No man, no woman?

Then Sir Percivale

'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,  
And women were as phantoms O, my  
brother,

Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee  
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?

For after I had lain so many nights,  
A bedmate of the snail and eel and snake,  
In grass and burdock, I was changed to  
wan

And meagre, and the vision had not  
come,

And then I chanced upon a goodly town  
With one great dwelling in the middle  
of it,

Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd  
By maidens each as fair as any flower  
But when they led me into hall, behold,  
The Princess of that castle was the one,  
Brother, and that one only, who had ever

Made my heart leap, for when I moved  
of old

A slender page about her father's hall,  
And she a slender maiden, all my heart  
Went after her with longing yet we  
twain

Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow  
And now I came upon her once again,  
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,  
And all his land and wealth and state  
were hers

And while I tarried, every day she set  
A banquet richer than the day before  
By me, for all her longing and her will  
Was toward me as of old, till one fair  
morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream  
That flash'd across her orchard underneath  
Her castle walls, she stole upon my walk,  
And calling me the greatest of all knights,  
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first  
time,

And gave herself and all her wealth to me  
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning  
word,

That most of us would follow wandering  
fies,

And the Quest fided in my heart Anon,  
The heads of all her people drew to me,  
With supplication both of knees and  
tongue

"We have heard of thee thou art our  
greatest knight,

Our Lady says it, and we well believe  
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,  
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land "

O me, my brother! but one night my vow  
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,  
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own  
self,

And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her,

Then after I was join'd with Gralahad  
Cared not for her, nor anything upon  
earth'

Then said the monk, 'Poor men, when  
yule is cold,  
Must be content to sit by little fires  
And thus am I, so that ye care for me  
Ever so little, yet, and blest be Heaven

That brought thee here to this poor house  
of ours

Where all the brethren are so hard, to  
waim

My cold heart with a friend but O the  
pity

To find thine own first love once more—  
to hold,

Hold her a wealthy bride within thine  
arms,

Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,  
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed  
For we that want the warmth of double  
life,

We that are plagued with dreams of  
something sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—  
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,  
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,  
But live like an old badger in his earth,  
With earth about him everywhere, despite  
All fast and penance Saw ye none be  
side,

None of your knights "

'Yea so,' said Percivale

'One night my pathway swerving east, I  
saw

The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bois  
All in the middle of the rising moon

And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him,  
and he me,

And each made joy of either, then he  
ask'd,

"Where is he? hast thou seen him—  
Lancelot?—Once,"

Said good Sir Bois, "he dash'd across me  
—mad,

And maddening what he rode and when  
I cried,

'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest  
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not!  
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,  
For now there is a lion in the way'  
So vanish'd "

'Then Sir Bois had ridden on  
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,  
Because his former madness, once the talk  
And scandal of our table, had return'd,

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship  
him

That ill to him is ill to them, to Bois  
Beyond the rest he well had been content  
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have  
seen,

The Holy Cup of healing, and, indeed,  
Being so clouded with his grief and love,  
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest  
If God would send the vision, well if not,  
The Quest and he were in the hands of  
Heaven

'And then, with small adventure met,  
Sir Bois

Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,  
And found a people there among their  
craggs,

Our race and blood, a remnant that were  
left

Paynim amid their circles, and the stones  
They pitch up straight to heaven and  
their wise men

Were strong in that old magic which can  
trace

The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at  
him

And this high Quest is at a simple thing  
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's  
words—

A mocking fire "what other fire than  
he,

Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom  
blows,

And the sea rolls, and all the world is  
warm'd?"

And when his answer chafed them, the  
rough crowd,

Hearing he had a difference with their  
priests,

Seized him, and bound and plunged him  
into a cell

Of great piled stones, and lying bounden  
there

In darkness thio' innumerable hours

He heard the hollow-ringing heavens  
sweep

Over him till by miracle—what else?—  
Heavy as it was, a great stone slept and  
fell,

Such as no wind could move and thio'  
the gap

Glimmer'd the streaming scud then  
came a night

Still as the day was loud, and thio' the  
gap

The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table  
Round—

For, brother, so one night, because they  
roll

Thio' such a round in heaven, we named  
the stairs,

Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—  
And these, like bright eyes of familiar  
friends,

In on him shone "And then to me, to  
me,"

Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes  
of mine,

Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for  
myself—

Across the seven clear stairs—O grace to  
me—

In colour like the fingers of a hand  
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail

Glided and past, and close upon it perld  
A sharp quick thunder "Afterwards, a

mad,  
Who kept our holy faith among her kin

In secret, entering, loosed and let him go'

To whom the monk "And I remember  
now

That pelican on the crosque Sir Bors it  
was

Who spake so low and sadly at our board,  
And mighty reverent at our grace when he

A square set man and honest, and his  
eyes,

An out door sign of all the warmth within,  
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a

cloud,  
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one

Ay, ay, Sir Bois, who else? But when  
ye reach'd

The city, found ye all your knights re-  
turn'd,

O! was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,  
Tell me, and what said each, and what  
the King?"

Then answer'd Peircivale 'And that  
can I,  
Brother, and truly, since the living words  
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King  
Pass not from door to door and out again,  
But sit within the house O, when we  
reach'd  
The city, our hoises stumbling as they  
trode  
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,  
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cocka-  
trices,  
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the  
stones  
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to  
the hall

'And there sat Aithur on the dais  
throne,  
And those that had gone out upon the  
Quest,  
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of  
them,  
And those that had not, stood before the  
King,  
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bid  
me hail,  
Saying, "A welfare in thine eye reproves  
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee  
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford  
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late  
Among the strange devices of our kings,  
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of  
ours,  
And from the statue Meilin moulded for  
us  
Half wrench'd a golden wing, but now—  
the Quest,  
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,  
That Joseph brought of old to Glaston-  
bury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast  
heard,  
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve  
To pass away into the quiet life,  
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning,  
ask'd  
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for  
thee?"

"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for  
such as I  
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,  
Who made me sure the Quest was not  
for me,  
For I was much aweared of the Quest  
But found a silk pavilion in a field,  
And merry maidens in it, and then this  
gale  
Took my pavilion from the tenting pin,  
And blew my merry maidens all about  
With all discomfort, yea, and but for this,  
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant  
to me"

'He ceased, and Arthur turn'd to  
whom at first  
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering,  
push'd  
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught  
his hand,  
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him,  
stood,  
Until the King espied him, saying to him,  
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true  
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail,"  
and Bors,  
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it  
I saw it," and the tears were in his eyes

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for  
the rest  
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm,  
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,  
Our Arthur kept his best until the last,  
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the  
King, "my friend,  
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for  
thee?"

"Our mightiest!" answer'd Lancelot,  
with a groan,  
"O King!"—and when he paused,  
methought I spied  
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—  
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,  
Happier are those that welter in their sin,  
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for  
slime,  
Slime of the ditch but in me lived a sin  
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,

Noble, and knightly in me twined and  
 clung  
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome  
 flower  
 And poisonous grew together, each as  
 each,  
 Not to be pluck'd asunder, and when thy  
 knights  
 Sware, I sware with them only in the hope  
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail  
 They might be pluck'd asunder Then I  
 spake  
 To one most holy saint, who wept and  
 said,  
 That save they could be pluck'd asunder,  
 all  
 My quest were but in vain, to whom I  
 vow'd  
 That I would work according as he will'd  
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd  
 and strove  
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,  
 My madness came upon me as of old,  
 And whipt me into waste fields far away,  
 There was I beaten down by little men,  
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of  
 my sword  
 And shadow of my spear had been enow  
 To scare them from me once, and then  
 I came  
 All in my folly to the naked shore,  
 Wide flats, where nothing but coarse  
 grasses grew,  
 But such a blast, my King, began to blow,  
 So loud a blast along the shore and sea,  
 Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,  
 Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the  
 sea  
 Drove like a cataract, and all the sand  
 Swept like a river, and the clouded  
 heavens  
 Were shaken with the motion and the  
 sound  
 And blackening in the sea foam sway'd a  
 boat,  
 Half swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a  
 chain,  
 And in my madness to myself I said,  
 'I will embark and I will lose myself,  
 And in the great sea wash away my sin'

I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat  
 Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,  
 And with me drove the moon and all the  
 stars,  
 And the wind fell, and on the seventh  
 night  
 I heard the shingle grunding in the surge,  
 And felt the boat shock earth, and looking  
 up,  
 Behold, the enchanted towers of Car  
 bonek,  
 A castle like a rock upon a rock,  
 With chasm-like portals open to the sea,  
 And steps that met the breaker there  
 was none  
 Stood near it but a lion on each side  
 That kept the entry, and the moon was  
 full  
 Then from the boat I leapt, and up the  
 stairs  
 There drew my sword With sudden-  
 flaring manes  
 Those two great beasts rose upright like  
 a man,  
 Each girt a shoulder, and I stood  
 between,  
 And, when I would have smitten them,  
 heard a voice,  
 'Doubt not, go forward, if thou doubt,  
 the beasts  
 Will tear thee piecemeal' Then with  
 violence  
 The sword was dash'd from out my hand,  
 and fell  
 And up into the sounding hall I past,  
 But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,  
 No bench nor table, painting on the wall  
 Or shield of knight, only the rounded  
 moon  
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea  
 But always in the quiet house I heard,  
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,  
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost  
 tower  
 To the eastward up I climb'd a thousand  
 steps  
 With pain as in a dream I seem'd to  
 climb  
 For ever at the last I reach'd a door,  
 A light was in the crannies, and I heard,



'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord  
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail'  
Then in my madness I essay'd the door,  
It gave, and thro' a stormy glare, a heat  
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,  
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,  
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd  
away—

O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,  
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around  
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings  
and eyes

And but for all my madness and my sin,  
And then my swooning, I had sworn I  
saw

That which I saw, but what I saw was  
veil'd

And cover'd, and this Quest was not for  
me "

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left

The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,  
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish  
words,—

A reckless and irreverent knight was he,  
Now bolden'd by the silence of his  
king,—

Well, I will tell thee "O King, my  
liege," he said,

"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of  
thine ?

When have I stinted stroke in foughten  
field ?

But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,  
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men  
mad,

Yea, made our mightiest madder than  
our least

But by mine eyes and by mine ears I  
swear,

I will be deifer than the blue eyed cat,  
And thine is blind as any noonday owl,  
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,  
Henceforward "

"Deifer," said the blameless King,  
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things  
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,  
Being too blind to have desire to see

But if indeed there came a sign from  
heaven,

Blessed are Bois, Lancelot and Percivale,  
For these have seen according to their  
sight

For every fiery prophet in old times,  
And all the sacred madness of the bard,  
When God made music thro' them, could  
but speak

His music by the framework and the  
choird,

And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth

"Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot  
never yet

Could all of true and noble in knight and  
man

Twine round one sin, whatever it might  
be,

With such a closeness, but apart there  
grew,

Save that he were the swine thou spakest  
of,

Some root of knighthood and pure noble-  
ness,

Whereto see thou, that it may bear its  
flower

"And spake I not too truly, O my  
knights ?

Was I too dark a prophet when I said  
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,  
That most of them would follow wan-  
dering fires,

Lost in the quagmire ?—lost to me and  
gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,  
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a  
tithe—

And out of those to whom the vision came  
My greatest hardly will believe he saw,  
Another hath beheld it afar off,  
And leaving human wrongs to right them  
selves,

Cares but to pass into the silent life  
And one hath had the vision face to  
face,

And now his chan desires him here in  
vain,

However they may crown him elsewhere

"And some among you held, that if  
 the King  
 Had seen the sight he would have sworn  
 the vow  
 Not easily, seeing that the King must  
 guard  
 That which he rules, and is but as the hind  
 To whom a space of land is given to  
 plow  
 Who may not wander from the allotted  
 field  
 Before his work be done, but, being done,  
 Let visions of the night or of the day  
 Come, as they will, and many a time  
 they come,  
 Until this earth he walks on seems not  
 earth,  
 This light that strikes his eyeball is not  
 light,  
 This air that smites his forehead is not air  
 But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—  
 In moments when he feels he cannot die,  
 And knows himself no vision to himself,  
 Nor the high God a vision, nor that One  
 Who rose again ye have seen what ye  
 have seen "

'So spake the King I knew not all  
 he meant '

### PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill  
 the gap  
 Left by the Holy Quest, and as he sat  
 In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors  
 Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a  
 youth,  
 Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields  
 Past, and the sunshine came along with  
 him

'Make me thy knight, because I know,  
 Sir King,  
 All that belongs to knighthood, and I love '  
 Such was his cry for having heard the  
 King  
 Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize  
 A golden circlet and a knightly sword,  
 Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won

The golden circlet, for himself the sword  
 And there were those who knew him near  
 the King,  
 And promised for him and Arthur made  
 him knight

And this new knight, Sir Pellers of the  
 isles—

But lately come to his inheritance,  
 And lord of many a barren isle was he—  
 Riding at noon, a day or twain before,  
 Across the forest call'd of Dorn, to find  
 Caeleon and the King, had felt the sun  
 Beat like a strong knight on his helm,  
 and reclin'd

Almost to falling from his horse, but  
 saw

Near him a mound of even sloping side,  
 Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,  
 And here and there great hollies under  
 them,

But for a mile all round was open space,  
 And fern and heath and slowly Pelleas  
 drew

To that dim day, then binding his good  
 horse

To a tice, cast himself down, and as he  
 lay

At random looking over the brown earth  
 Thro' that green glooming twilight of the  
 grove,

It seem'd to Pellers that the fern without  
 Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,  
 So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it  
 Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud  
 Floating, and once the shadow of a bird  
 Flying, and then a fawn, and his eyes  
 closed

And since he loved all maidens, but no  
 maid

In special, half awake he whisper'd,  
 'Where?'

O where? I love thee, tho' I know thee  
 not

For fain thou art and pure as Guenevere,  
 And I will make thee with my spear and  
 sword

As famous—O my Queen, my Guenevere,  
 For I will be thine Arthur when we  
 meet '

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk  
And laughter at the limit of the wood,  
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,  
Strange as to some old prophet might  
have seem'd

A vision hovering on a sea of fire,  
Damsels in divers colours like the cloud  
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them  
On horses, and the horses richly trapt  
Burst high in that bright line of blacken  
stood

And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,  
And one was pointing this way, and one  
that,  
Because the way was lost

And Pelleas rose,  
And loosed his horse, and led him to the  
light  
There she that seem'd the chief among  
them said,  
'In happy time behold our pilot stay!  
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,  
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights  
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way  
To right? to left? straight forward? back  
again?  
Which? tell us quickly'

And Pelleas gazing thought,  
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?'  
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her  
bloom  
A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,  
And round her limbs, mature in woman  
hood,  
And slender was her hand and small her  
shape,  
And but for those large eyes, the haunts  
of scorn,  
She might have seem'd a toy to tattle with,  
And pass and care no more. But while  
he gazed  
The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,  
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul  
For as the base man, judging of the good,  
Puts his own baseness in him by default  
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend  
All the young beauty of his own soul to  
hers,

Believing her, and when she spake to  
him,

Stammer'd, and could not make her a  
reply

For out of the waste islands had he come,  
Where saving his own sisters he had known  
Scarce any but the women of his isles,  
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd  
against the gulls,

Makers of nets, and living from the sea

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady  
round

And look'd upon her people, and as when  
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,  
The circle widens till it lip the marge,  
Spread the slow smile thro' all her com-  
pany

Three knights were thereamong, and they  
too smiled,

Scorning him, for the lady was Ettarre,  
And she was a great lady in her land

Again she said, 'O wild and of the  
woods,  
Knowest thou not the fashion of our  
speech?

Or have the Heralds but given thee a fair  
face,  
Lacking a tongue?'

'O damsel,' answer'd he,  
'I woke from dreams, and coming out  
of gloom

Was dazzled by the sudden light, and  
crave

Pardon but will ye to Caerleon? I  
Go likewise shall I lead you to the King?'

'Lead then,' she said, and thro' the  
woods they went

And while they rode, the meaning in his  
eyes,

His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,  
His broken utterances and bashfulness,  
Were all a burthen to her, and in her  
heart

She mutter'd, 'I have lighted on a fool,  
Raw, yet so stile!' But since her mind  
was bent

On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name

And title, 'Queen of Beauty,' in the lists  
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she  
thought

That peradventure he will fight for me,  
And win the circlet therefore flatter'd  
him,

Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem'd  
His wish by hers was echo'd, and her  
knights

And all her damsels too were gracious to  
him,

For she was a great lady

And when they reach'd  
Caeleon, ere they past to lodging, she,  
Taking his hand, 'O the strong hand,'  
she said,

'See ' look at mine ' but wilt thou fight  
for me,

And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,  
That I may love thee?"

Then his helpless heart  
Leapt, and he cried, 'Ay ' wilt thou if I  
win?"

'Ay, that will I,' she answer'd, and she  
laugh'd,

And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it  
from her,

Then glanced askew at those three knights  
of hers,

Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her

'O happy world,' thought Pelleas, 'all,  
meseems,

Are happy, I the happiest of them all '  
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his  
blood,

And green wood-ways, and eyes among  
the leaves,

Then being on the morrow knighted,  
sware

To love one only And as he came away,  
The men who met him rounded on their  
heels

And wonder'd after him, because his face  
Shone like the countenance of a priest of  
old

Against the flame about a sacrifice  
Kindled by fire from heaven so glad  
was he

Then Aithur made vast banquets, and  
strange knights

From the four winds came in and each  
one sat,

Tho' served with choice from air, land,  
stream, and sea,

Oft in mid banquet measuring with his  
eyes

His neighbours make and might and  
Pelleas look'd

Noble among the noble, for he dream'd  
His lady loved him, and he knew himself

Loved of the King and him his new-  
made knight

Woishipt, whose lightest whisper moved  
him more

Than all the ranged reasons of the world

Then blush'd and brake the morning  
of the jousts,

And this was call'd 'The Tournament of  
Youth '

For Aithur, loving his young knight,  
withheld

His older and his mightier from the lists,  
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,

According to her promise, and remain  
Lord of the tourney And Aithur had

the jousts

Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk  
Held the gilded parapets were crown'd

With faces, and the great tower fill'd with  
eyes

Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew  
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the  
field

With honour so by that strong hand of  
his

The sword and golden circlet were  
achieved

Then rang the shout his lady loved  
the heart

Of pride and glory fired her face, her eye  
Sparkled, she caught the circlet from his  
lance,

And there before the people crown'd  
herself

So for the last time she was gracious to  
him

Then at Czerleon for a space—her look  
Bright for all others, cloudier on her  
knight—  
Linger'd Ettarre and seeing Pelleas  
droop,  
Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee  
much,  
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face  
To him who won thee glory ' ' And she  
said,  
'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your  
bowel,  
My Queen, he had not won ' Whereat  
the Queen,  
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,  
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went  
her way

But after, when her damsels, and her-  
self,  
And those three knights all set their  
faces home,  
Sir Pelleas follow'd She that saw him  
cried,  
'Damsels—and yet I should be shamed  
to say it—  
I cannot bide Sir Bisy Keep him back  
Among yourselves Would rather that  
we had  
Some tough old knight who knew the  
worldly way,  
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride  
And jest with take him to you, keep  
him off,  
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,  
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,  
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their  
boys  
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one  
To find his mettle, good and if he fly  
us,  
Small matter ' let him ' This her  
damsels heard,  
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,  
They, closing round him thro' the journey  
home,  
Acted her best, and always from her side  
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,  
So that he could not come to speech  
with her

And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang  
the budge,  
Down rang the gate of iron thro' the  
groove,  
And he was left alone in open field

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas  
thought,  
'To those who love them, trials of our  
faith  
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,  
For loyal to the uttermost am I '  
So made his moan, and, darkness falling,  
sought  
A priory not far off, there lodged, but  
rose  
With morning every day, and, moist or  
dry,  
Full aim'd upon his charger all day long  
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to  
him

And this persistence turn'd her scorn  
to wrath  
Then calling her three knights, she  
charged them, 'Out '  
And drove him from the walls ' And out  
they came,  
But Pelleas overthrew them as they  
dash'd  
Against him one by one, and these  
return'd,  
But still he kept his watch beneath the  
wall

Thereon her wrath became a hate,  
and once,  
A week beyond, while walking on the  
walls  
With her three knights, she pointed  
downward, 'Look,  
He haunts me—I cannot breathe—he  
sieges me,  
Down ' strike him ' put my hate into  
your strokes,  
And drive him from my walls ' And  
down they went,  
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one,  
And from the tower above him cried  
Ettarre,  
'Bind him, and bring him in '

He heard her voice,  
Then let the strong hand, which had  
overthrown  
Her minion knights, by those he over-  
threw  
Be bounden straight, and so they brought  
him in

Then when he came before Ettarre,  
the sight  
Of her rich beauty made him at one  
glance  
More bondsman in his heart than in his  
bonds  
Yet with good cheer he spake, 'Behold  
me, Lady,  
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will,  
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,  
Content am I so that I see thy face  
But once a day for I have sworn my  
vows,  
And thou hast given thy promise, and I  
know  
That all these pains are trials of my faith,  
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me  
strained  
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length  
Yield me thy love and know me for thy  
knight'

Then she began to rail so bitterly,  
With all her damself, he was stricken  
mute,  
But when she mock'd his vows and the  
great King,  
Lighted on words 'For pity of thine  
own self,  
Peace, Lady, peace is he not thine and  
mine?'  
'Thou fool,' she said, 'I never heard his  
voice  
But long'd to break away Unbind him  
now,  
And thrust him out of doors, for save  
he be  
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,  
He will return no more' And those, her  
three,  
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him  
from the gate

And after this, a week beyond, again  
She call'd them, saying, 'There he  
watches yet,  
There like a dog before his master's door'  
Kick'd, he returns do ye not hate him,  
ye?  
Ye know yourselves how can ye bide at  
peace,  
Affronted with his fulsome innocence?  
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,  
No men to strike? Fall on him all at  
once,  
And if ye slay him I reck not if ye fail,  
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,  
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in  
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds'

She spake, and at her will they couch'd  
their spears,  
Three against one and Gawain passing  
by,  
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw  
Low down beneath the shadow of those  
towers  
A villainy, three to one and thro' his  
heart  
The fire of honour and all noble deeds  
Flash'd, and he call'd, 'I strike upon thy  
side—  
The traitors!' 'Nay,' said Pelleas, 'but  
forbear,  
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will'

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,  
Forbore, but in his heart and eagerness  
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, with-  
held  
A moment from the victim that he sees  
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and  
kills

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to  
three,  
And they rose up, and bound, and brought  
him in  
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas,  
burn'd  
Full on her knights in many an evil name  
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten  
hound

'Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,  
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,  
And let who will release him from his bonds  
And if he comes again'—there she brake short,  
And Pelleas answer'd, 'Lady, for indeed  
I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful,  
I cannot brook to see your beauty mar'd  
Thro' evil spite and if ye love me not,  
I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn  
I had liefer ye were worthy of my love,  
Than to be loved again of you—farewell,  
And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love,  
Vex not yourself ye will not see me more'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man  
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,  
'Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,  
If love there be yet him I loved not  
Why?  
I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him  
A something—was it nobler than my self?—  
Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind  
He could not love me, did he know me well  
Nay, let him go—and quickly' And her knights  
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,  
And flung them o'er the walls, and after wud,  
Shaking his hands, as from a larva's rag,  
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and art thou not—  
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made  
Knight of his table, yea and he that won

The ciclet? wherefore hast thou so defamed  
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,  
As let these cattiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answer'd, 'O, then wills are heis  
For whom I won the ciclet, and mine, heis,  
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,  
Maid tho' it be with spite and mockery now,  
Other than when I found her in the woods,  
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,  
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,  
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face,  
Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness'

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,  
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will,  
And let my lady beat me if she will  
But in she send her delegate to thiall  
These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then  
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,  
And let my lady seal the stump for him,  
Howl as he may But hold me for your friend  
Come, ye know nothing here I pledge my troth,  
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,  
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,  
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand  
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say  
That I have slain thee She will let me in  
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall,  
Then, when I come within her counsels, then  
From pime to vespeis will I chant thy praise  
As prowtest knight and truest lover, more  
Than any have sung thee living, till she long

To have thee back in lusty life again,  
 Not to be bound, save by white bonds  
     and wain,  
 Dearer than freedom Wherefore now  
     thy horse  
 And amour let me go be comforted  
 Give me three days to melt her fancy,  
     and hope  
 The third night hence will bring thee  
     news of gold'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his  
     aims,  
 Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and  
     took  
 Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but  
     help—  
 Art thou not he whom men call light of  
     love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so  
     light'  
 Then bounded forward to the castle walls,  
 And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,  
 And winded it, and that so musically  
 That all the old echoes hidden in the  
     wall  
 Rang out like hollow woods at hunting  
     tide

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower,  
 'Avaunt,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee  
     not'  
 But Gawain lifting up his vizor said,  
 'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,  
 And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye  
     hate  
 Behold his horse and armour Open  
     gates,  
 And I will make you merry'

And down they ran,  
 Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo'  
 Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath  
 His horse and armour will ye let him in?  
 He slew him! Gawain, Gawain of the  
     court,  
 Sir Gawain—there he waits below the  
     wall,  
 Blowing his bugle as who should say him  
     nay'

And so, leave given, straight on thro'  
     open door  
 Rode Gawain, whom she greeted cour-  
     teously  
 'Dead, is it so?' she ask'd 'Ay, ay,'  
     said he,  
 'And oft in dying cried upon your name'  
 'Pity on him,' she answer'd, 'a good  
     knight,  
 But never let me bide one hour at peace'  
 'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair  
     enow  
 But I to your dead man have given my  
     troth,  
 That whom ye loathe, him will I make  
     your love'

So those three days, aimless about the  
     land,  
 Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering  
 Waited, until the third night brought a  
     moon  
 With promise of large light on woods and  
     ways

Hot was the night and silent, but a  
     sound  
 Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—  
 Which Pelleas had heard sung before the  
     Queen,  
 And seen her sadden listening—next his  
     heart,  
 And man'd his rest—'A worm within the  
     rose'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,  
 A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous  
     fair,  
 One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and  
     sky,  
 One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all  
     mine air—  
 I cared not for the thorns, the thorns  
     were there

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,  
 One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,  
 No rose but one—what other rose had I?  
 One rose, my rose, a rose that will not  
     die,—  
 He dies who loves it,—if the worm be  
     there'



This tender rhyme, and evermore the  
doubt,  
'Why lingers Gawain with his golden  
news?'  
So shook him that he could not rest, but  
rode  
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his  
horse  
Hard by the gates Wide open were the  
gates,  
And no watch kept, and in thio' these  
he past,  
And heard but his own steps, and his  
own heart  
Beating, for nothing moved but his own  
self,  
And his own shadow Then he crost  
the court,  
And spied not any light in hall or bower,  
But saw the postern portal also wide  
Yawning, and up a slope of garden, all  
Of roses white and red, and bimbles mixt  
And overgrowing them, went on, and  
found,  
Here too, all hush'd below the mellow  
moon,  
Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave  
Came lightening downward, and so spilt  
itself  
Among the roses, and was lost again

Then was he ware of three pavilions  
near'd  
Above the bushes, gilden perkt in one,  
Red after revel, dion'd hei ludane knights  
Slumbering, and then three squires across  
then feet  
In one, their malice on the placid lip  
Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels  
lay  
And in the thud, the circlet of the jousts  
Bound on her brow, were Gawain and  
Ettarie

Back, as a hand that pushes thio' the  
leaf  
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew  
Back, as a coward slinks from what he  
fears  
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound

Berten, did Pelleas in an utter shame  
Creep with his shadow thio' the court  
again,  
Fingering at his sword-handle until he  
stood  
There on the castle-bridge once more, and  
thought,  
'I will go back, and slay them where they  
lie'

And so went back, and seeing them yet  
in sleep  
Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy  
sleep,  
Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword,  
and thought,  
'What! slay a sleeping knight?' the King  
hath bound  
And sworn me to this brotherhood,'  
again,  
'Alas that ever a knight should be so  
false'  
Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groan-  
ing laid  
The naked sword athwart their naked  
throats,  
Their left it, and them sleeping, and she  
lay,  
The circlet of the tourney round her  
brows,  
And the sword of the tourney across her  
throat

And forth he past, and mounting on  
his horse  
Stared at hei towers that, larger than  
themselves  
In their own darkness, throng'd into the  
moon  
Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs,  
and clench'd  
His hands, and madden'd with himself  
and moan'd

'Would they have risen against me in  
then blood  
At the last day? I might have answer'd  
them  
Even before high God O towers so  
strong,

Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze  
 The clack of earthquake shivering to your  
     base  
 Split you, and Hell buist up your haulot  
     roofs  
 Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro'  
     within,  
 Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a  
     skull !  
 Let the fierce east scream thro' your eye  
     let holes,  
 And whirl the dust of harlots round and  
     round  
 In dung and nettles ! hiss, snake—I saw  
     him there—  
 Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell   Who  
     yells  
 Here in the still sweet summer night, but  
     I—  
 I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her  
     fool ?  
 Fool, beast—he, she, or I ? myself most  
     fool,  
 Beast too, as lacking human wit—dis-  
     graced,  
 Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—  
 Love?—we be all alike   only the King  
 Hath made us fools and liars   O noble  
     vows !  
 O great and sane and simple race of brutes  
 That own no lust because they have no  
     law !  
 For why should I have loved her to my  
     shame ?  
 I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame  
 I never loved her, I but lusted for her—  
 Away—'

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,  
 And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the  
     night

Then she, that felt the cold touch on  
     her throat,  
 Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd  
     herself  
 To Gawain 'Liar, for thou hast not slain  
 This Pelleas ! here he stood, and might  
     have slain  
 Meand thyself ' And he that tells the tale

Says that her ever veering fancy turn'd  
 To Pelleas, as the one true knight on  
     earth,  
 And only lover, and thro' her love her  
     life  
 Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain

But he by wild and way, for half the  
     night,  
 And over hard and soft, striking the sod  
 From out the soft, the spail from off the  
     hard,  
 Rode till the star above the wakening sun,  
 Beside that tower where Peircivale was  
     cowl'd,  
 Glanced from the rosy forehead of the  
     dawn  
 For so the words were flash'd into his  
     heart  
 He knew not whence or wherefore ' O  
     sweet star,

Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn !'  
 And there he would have wept, but felt  
     his eyes  
 Harder and drier than a fountain bed  
 In summer thither came the village girls  
 And linger'd talking, and they come no  
     more

Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from  
     the heights  
 Again with living witeis in the change  
 Of seasons hard his eyes, harder his  
     heart  
 Seem'd, but so weary were his limbs,  
     that he,

Gasping, 'Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,  
 Here let me rest and die,' cast himself  
     down,  
 And gulfd his griefs in inmost sleep, so  
     lay,  
 Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired  
 The hall of Meilin, and the morning star  
 Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame,  
     and fell

He woke, and being ware of some one  
     nigh,  
 Sent hands upon him, as to tear him,  
     crying,  
 'False ! and I held thee pure as Guinevere '

But Percivale stood near him and  
replied,  
'Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?  
O! art thou mazed with dreams? or being  
one  
Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard  
That Lancelot'—there he check'd him  
self and paused

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with  
one  
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword  
That made it plunges thro' the wound  
again,  
And pricks it deeper and he shrank and  
wail'd,  
'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was  
mute  
'Have any of our Round Table held then  
vows?'  
And Percivale made answer not a word  
'Is the King true?' 'The King' said  
Percivale  
'Why then let men couple it once with  
wolves  
What' art thou mad?'

But Pelleas, leaping up,  
Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his  
horse  
And fled small pity upon his horse had  
he,  
Or on himself, or any, and when he met  
A couple, one that held a hand for alms—  
Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf  
elm  
That turns its back on the salt blast, the  
boy  
Paused not, but overrode him, shouting,  
'False,  
And false with Gawain!' and so left him  
bruised  
And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and  
wood  
Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,  
That follows on the turning of the world,  
Darken'd the common path he twitch'd  
the reins,  
And made his beast that better knew it,  
swerve

Now off it and now on, but when he saw  
High up in heaven the hall that Merlin  
built,  
Blackening against the dead green stripes  
of even,  
'Black nest of rats,' he groan'd, 'ye build  
too high'

Not long thereafter from the city gates  
Issued Sir Lancelot riding airy,  
Warm with a gracious parting from the  
Queen,  
Peace at his heart, and gazing at a steed  
And marvelling what it was on whom  
the boy,  
Across the silent seeded meadow grass  
Doine, dash'd and Lancelot, saying,  
'What name hast thou  
That ridest here so blindly and so  
hurd?'  
'I have no name,' he shouted, 'I scourge  
am I,  
To lash the traitors of the Table Round'  
'Yea, but thy name?' 'I have many  
names,' he cried  
'I am wrath and shame and hate and evil  
fame,  
And like a poisonous wind I pass to  
blast  
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the  
Queen'  
'First over me,' said Lancelot, 'shalt  
thou pass'  
'Fight therefore,' yell'd the other, and  
either knight  
Drew back a spruce, and when they closed,  
at once  
The werry steed of Pelleas floundering  
flung  
His rider, who call'd out from the dark  
field,  
'Thou art false as Hell slay me I have  
no sword'  
Then Lancelot, 'Yea, between thy lips—  
and sharp,  
But here will I disengage it by thy death'  
'Slay then,' he shriek'd, 'my will is to be  
slun,'  
And Lancelot, with his heel upon the  
fall'n,

Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then  
spake  
‘Rise, weakling, I am Lancelot, say thy  
say’

And Lancelot slowly rode his waihorse  
back  
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while  
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark  
field,  
And follow’d to the city It chanced that  
both

Brake into hall together, worn and pale  
There with her knights and dames was  
Guinevere

Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot  
So soon return’d, and then on Pelleas,  
him

Who had not greeted her, but cast him-  
self

Down on a bench, hard breathing ‘Have  
ye fought?’

She ask’d of Lancelot ‘Ay, my Queen,’  
he said

‘And thou hast overthrown him?’ ‘Ay,  
my Queen’

Then she, turning to Pelleas, ‘O young  
knight,

Hath the great heart of knighthood in  
these fail’d

So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,  
A fall from him?’ Then, for he answer’d  
not,

‘O! hast thou other griefs? If I, the  
Queen,

May help them, loose thy tongue, and let  
me know’

But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce

She quail’d, and he, hissing ‘I have no  
sword,’

Spang from the door into the dark  
The Queen

Look’d hard upon her lover, he on her,  
And each foresaw the dolorous day to  
be

And all talk died, as in a grove all song  
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey,  
Then a long silence came upon the hall,  
And Modred thought, ‘The time is hard  
at hand’

## THE LAST TOURNAMENT

DAGONET, the fool, whom Gawain in his  
mood

Had made mock knight of Arthuri’s Table  
Round,

At Camelot, high above the yellowing  
woods,

Danced like a wither’d leaf before the hall  
And toward him from the hall, with harp

in hand,

And from the crown thereof a carcanet  
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize  
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,  
Came Tristram, saying, ‘Why skip ye  
so, Sir Fool?’

For Arthuri and Sir Lancelot riding once  
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock  
Heard a child wail A stump of oak  
half dead,

From roots like some black coil of carven  
snakes,

Clutch’d at the crag, and started thro’  
mid air

Bearing an eagle’s nest and thro’ the tree  
Rush’d ever a rainy wind, and thro’ the  
wind

Pierced ever a child’s cry and crag and  
tree

Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous  
nest,

This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,  
And all unscar’d from beak or talon,  
brought

A maiden babe, which Arthuri pitying  
took,

Then gave it to his Queen to rear the  
Queen

But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms  
Received, and after loved it tenderly,  
And named it Nestling, so forgot himself  
A moment, and her cares, till that young  
life

Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal  
cold

Past from her, and in time the carcanet  
Vext her with plaintive memories of the  
child

So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,  
 'Take thou the jewels of this dead in  
 nocence,  
 And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-  
 prize'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine  
 eagle borne  
 Dead nestling, and this honour after  
 death,  
 Following thy will' but, O my Queen,  
 I muse  
 Why ye not weal on arm, or neck, or  
 zone  
 Those diamonds that I rescued from the  
 tarn,  
 And Lancelot won, methought, for thee  
 to weal'

'Would rather you had let them fall,'  
 she cried,  
 'Plunge and be lost—ill fated as they  
 were,  
 A bitterness to me!—ye look amazed,  
 Not knowing they were lost as soon as  
 given—  
 Slid from my hands, when I was leaning  
 out  
 Above the river—that unhappy child  
 Past in her barge but worse luck will go  
 With these rich jewels, seeing that they  
 came  
 Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,  
 But the sweet body of a maiden babe  
 Perchance—who knows?—the purest of  
 thy knights  
 May win them for the purest of my maids'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts  
 With trumpet blowings ran on all the  
 ways  
 From Camelot in among the faded fields  
 To furthest towers, and everywhere the  
 knights  
 Arm'd for a day of glory before the King

But on the hither side of that loud morn  
 Into the hall stagger'd, his visage rabb'd  
 From ear to ear with dogwhip weals, his  
 nose

Bridge broken, one eye out, and one hand  
 off,  
 And one with shatter'd fingers dangling  
 lame,  
 A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what  
 evil beast  
 Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face?  
 or fiend?  
 Man was it who murr'd heaven's image  
 in thee thus?'

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of  
 splinter'd teeth,  
 Yet strangers to the tongue, and with  
 blunt stump  
 Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the  
 maim'd churl,

'He took them and he drave them to  
 his tower—  
 Some hold he was a noble knight of thine—  
 A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight,  
 he—  
 Loid, I was tending swine, and the Red  
 Knight  
 Brake in upon me and drave them to his  
 tower,  
 And when I call'd upon thy name as one  
 That doest right by gentle and by churl,  
 Maim'd me and maul'd, and would out-  
 right have slun,  
 Save that he swate me to a message,  
 saying,  
 "Tell thou the King and all his lairs, that I  
 Have founded my Round Table in the  
 North,  
 And whatsoever his own knights have  
 sworn  
 My knights have sworn the countai to  
 it—and say  
 My tower is full of harlots, like his court,  
 But mine are worthier, seeing they profess  
 To be none other than themselves—and say  
 My knights are all adulterers like his own,  
 But mine are truer, seeing they profess  
 To be none other, and say his hour is come,  
 The heathen are upon him, his long lance  
 Broken, and his Excalibur a straw'"

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the sene-  
schal,  
'Take thou my churl, and tend him  
curiously  
Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be  
whole  
The heathen—but that ever climbing  
wave,  
Hurl'd back again so often in empty form,  
Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,  
Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion,  
whom  
The wholesome realm is purged of other-  
where,  
Friends, thro' your manhood and your  
fealty,—now  
Make their last head like Satan in the  
North  
My younger knights, new-made, in whom  
your flower  
Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,  
Move with me toward them quelling,  
which achieved,  
The loneliest ways are safe from shore to  
shore  
But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place  
Enchur'd to-morrow, abide the field,  
For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle  
with it,  
Only to yield my Queen her own again?  
Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent—is it  
well?'

There to Sir Lancelot answer'd, 'It is  
well  
Yet better if the King abide, and leave  
The leading of his younger knights to me  
Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd  
him,  
And while they stood without the doors,  
the King  
Turn'd to him saying, 'Is it then so well?  
Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he  
Of whom was written, "A sound is in his  
ears"?'  
The foot that lingers, bidden go,—the  
glance  
That only seems half loyal to command,—

A muner somewhat fallen from revel-  
ence—  
Or have I dream'd the bearing of our  
knights  
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?  
Or whence the fever lest this my realm,  
uprear'd,  
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,  
From fit confusion and brute violences,  
Reel back into the beast, and be no  
more?'

He spoke, and taking all his younger  
knights,  
Down the slope city rode, and sharply  
turn'd  
North by the gate In her high bower  
the Queen,  
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,  
Watch'd her lord pass, and knew not that  
she sigh'd  
Then ran across her memory the strange  
rhyme  
Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who  
knows?  
From the great deep to the great deep he  
goes'

But when the morning of a tournament,  
By these in earnest those in mockery call'd  
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,  
Broke with wet wind blowing, Lancelot,  
Round whose sick head all night, like  
birds of prey,  
The words of Arthur flying shuck'd, rose  
And down a streetway hung with folds of  
pure  
White samite, and by fountains running  
wine,  
Where children sat in white with cups of  
gold,  
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow  
sad steps  
Ascending, fill'd his double dragon'd  
chair

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,  
Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their  
Queen  
White robed in honour of the stainless  
child,

And some with scatter'd jewels, like a  
bank  
Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of  
fire  
He look'd but once, and veil'd his eyes  
again

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a  
dream

To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll  
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began  
And ever the wind blew, and clowing leaf  
And gloom and gleam, and shower and  
shorn plume

Went down it—sighing wearily, as one  
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,  
When all the goodlier guests are past away,  
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the  
lists

He saw the laws that ruled the tournament  
Broken, but spoke not, once, a knight  
cast down

Before his throne of arbitration cursed  
The dead babe and the follies of the King,  
And once the laces of a helmet crack'd,  
And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,  
Modred, a narrow face—anon he heard  
The voice that billow'd round the banners  
roun

An organ sounding welcome to one knight,  
But newly enter'd, taller than the rest,  
And armour'd all in forest green, whereon  
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,  
And wearing but a holly spray for crest,  
With ever scattering berries, and on shield  
A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late  
From overseas in Brittany return'd,  
And marriage with a princess of that realm,  
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the  
Woods—

Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime  
with pun

His own against him, and now yearn'd to  
shake

The burthen off his heart in one full shock  
With Tristram even to death—his strong  
hands gript

And dim'd the gilt dragons right and left,  
Until he grow'd for wrath—so many of  
those,

That wane their ladies' colours on the  
casque,  
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the  
bounds,  
And there with gibes and flickering  
mockeries  
Stood, while he mutter'd, 'Craven crests !  
O shame !  
What faith have these in whom they swear  
to love ?  
The glory of our Round Table is no more !'

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave,  
the gems,  
Not speaking other word than 'Hast thou  
won ?  
Art thou the priest, brother ? See, the hand  
Wherewith thou takest this, is red !' to  
whom

Tristram, half-plagued by Lancelot's  
linguorous mood,  
Made answer, 'Ay, but wherefore toss  
me this  
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound ?  
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy—Strength  
of heart

And might of limb, but manly use and skill,  
Are winners in this pastime of our King  
My hand—belike the lance hath dript  
upon it—

No blood of mine, I trow, but O chief  
knight,

Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,  
Great brother, thou nor I have made the  
world,

Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine

And Tristram round the gallery made  
his hoise

Caracol, then bow'd his homage, bluntly  
saying,

'Fair damsels, each to him who worships  
each

Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold  
I bid my Queen of Beauty is not here !  
And most of these were mute, some anger'd,  
one

Murmuring, 'All courtesy is dead,' and  
one,

'The glory of our Round Table is no more !'

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and  
 mantle clung,  
 And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day  
 Went glooming down in wet and weariness  
 But under her black brows a swaithy one  
 I augh'd shrilly, cying, 'Praise the patient  
 saints,  
 Our one white day of Innocence hath past,  
 Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt So  
 be it  
 The snowdrop only, flowering thio' the  
 year,  
 Would make the world as blank as  
 Winter tide  
 Come—let us gladden then sad eyes, our  
 Queen's  
 And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity  
 With all the kindlier colours of the field'

So dame and damsel glitter'd at the  
 feast  
 Variously gay for he that tells the tale  
 Liken'd them, saying, as when an hour of  
 cold  
 Falls on the mountain in midsummer  
 snows,  
 And all the purple slopes of mountain  
 flowers  
 Pass under white, till the warm hour  
 returns  
 With veer of wind, and all are flowers  
 again,  
 So dame and damsel cast the simple white,  
 And glowing in all colours, the live grass,  
 Rose campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy,  
 glanced  
 About the revels, and with mirth so loud  
 Beyond all use, that, half amazed, the  
 Queen,  
 And wroth at Tristram and the lawless  
 jousts,  
 Brake up their sports, then slowly to her  
 bowei  
 Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord

And little Dagonet on the morrow  
 morn,  
 High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,  
 Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall

Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so,  
 Sir Fool?'  
 Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet  
 replied,  
 'Belike for lack of wiser company,  
 Or being fool, and seeing too much wit  
 Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip  
 To know myself the wisest knight of all'  
 'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 'tis eating  
 dry  
 To dance without a catch, a roundelay  
 To dance to' Then he twangled on his  
 harp,  
 And while he twangled little Dagonet stood  
 Quiet as any water sodden log  
 Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook,  
 But when the twangling ended, skipt again,  
 And being ask'd, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir  
 Fool?'

Made answer, 'I had hefer twenty years  
 Skip to the broken music of my brains  
 I han any broken music thou canst make'  
 Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to  
 come,  
 'Good now, what music have I broken,  
 fool?'  
 And little Dagonet, skipping, 'Arthui,  
 the King's,  
 For when thou playest that an with Queen  
 Isolt,  
 Thou makest broken music with thy bide,  
 Her duntier namesake down in Brittany—  
 And so thou breakest Arthui's music too'  
 'Save for that broken music in thy brains,  
 Sir fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break  
 thy head  
 Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were  
 o'er,  
 The life had flown, we sware but by the  
 shell—  
 I am but a fool to reason with a fool—  
 Come, thou art ciabb'd and sour but  
 lean me down,  
 Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,  
 And harken if my music be not true

' "Free love—free field—we love but  
 while we may  
 The woods are hush'd, their music is no  
 more



The leaf is dead, the yearning past away  
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are  
o'er

New life, new love, to suit the newer day  
New loves are sweet as those that went  
before

Free love—free field—we love but while  
we may "

'Ye might have moved slow—measure  
to my tune,  
Not stood stockstill I made it in the  
woods,  
And heard it ring as true as tested gold '

But Dagonet with one foot poised in  
his hand,  
'Friend, did ye mark that fountain  
yesterday  
Made to run wine?—but this had run  
itself

All out like a long life to a sour end—  
And them that round it sat with golden  
cups

To hand the wine to whosoever came—  
The twelve small dromochs white as  
Innocence,

In honour of poor Innocence the babe,  
Who left the gems which Innocence the  
Queen

Lent to the King, and Innocence the King  
Gave for a prize—and one of those white  
slips

Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,  
"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and thereupon  
I drank,

Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the  
draught was mud '

And Tristram, 'Was it muddier than  
thy gibes?'

Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—  
Not marking how the knighthood mock  
thee, fool—

"Fear God honour the King—his one  
true knight—

Sole follower of the vows"—for here be  
they

Who knew thee swine now before I came,  
Smuttier than blasted grain but when  
the King

Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up  
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart,  
Which left thee less than fool, and less  
than swine,  
A naked tught—yet swine I hold thee still,  
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee  
swine '

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,  
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round  
my neck

In lieu of hairs, I'll hold thou hast some  
touch

Of music, since I care not for thy pearls  
Swine? I have wallow'd, I have wash'd  
—the world

Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day  
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind  
Hath foul'd me—an I wallow'd, then I  
wash'd—

I have had my dry and my philosophies—  
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's  
fool

Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams  
and geese

Tripp'd round a Prynim harper once,  
who thummd

On such a wire as musically as thou  
Some such fine song—but never a king's  
fool '

And Tristram, 'Then were swine,  
goats, asses, geese

The wiser fools, seeing thy Prynim brud  
Had such a mastery of his mystery  
That he could harp his wife up out of hell '

Then Dagonet, tuning on the ball of  
his foot,

'And whither harp'st thou thine? down'  
and thyself

Down! and two more a helpful harper  
thou,

That harpest downward! Dost thou know  
the story

We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?'

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when  
our King

Was victor wellnigh dry by dry the  
knights,

Glorying in each new glory, set his name  
High on all hills, and in the signs of  
heaven'

And Dagonet answer'd, 'Ay, and when  
the land  
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set  
yourself  
To babble about him, all to show your  
wit—  
And whether he were King by courtesy,  
Or King by right—and so went harping  
down  
The black king's highway, got so far, and  
grew  
So witty that ye play'd at ducks and  
drakes  
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of  
fire  
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the  
stru?'

'Nay, fool,' said Tristram, 'not in  
open day'  
And Dagonet, 'Nay, nor will I see it  
and hear  
It makes a silent music up in heaven,  
And I, and Arthur and the angels hear,  
And then we skip' 'Lo, fool,' he said,  
'ye talk  
Fool's treason is the King thy brother  
fool?'  
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and  
shill'd,  
'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of  
fools!  
Conceits himself as God that he can make  
Figs out of thistles, silk from hustles, milk  
From burning spurge, honey from hornet  
combs,  
And men from beasts—Long live the king  
of fools!'

And down the city Dagonet danced  
away,  
But thro' the slowly-mellowing avenues  
And solitary passes of the wood  
Rode Tristram toward Lyonesse and  
the west  
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt  
With ruby circled neck, but evermore

Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood  
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye  
For all that walk'd, or crept, or peich'd,  
or flew  
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath  
blown,  
Unruffling waters re collect the shape  
Of one that in them sees himself, return'd,  
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,  
Or ev'n a fall'n feather, vanish'd again

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn  
Thro' many a league long bowei he rode  
At length  
A lodge of intertwisted beechen boughs  
Furze cramm'd, and blacken roof, the  
which himself  
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt  
Against a shower, dark in the golden  
grove  
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where  
She lived a moon in that low lodge with  
him  
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish  
King,  
With six or seven, when Tristram was  
away,  
And snatch'd her thence, yet chiding  
worse than shame  
Her wretched Tristram, spake not any  
word,  
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness

And now that desert lodge to Tristram  
lookt  
So sweet, that halting, in he past, and  
sank  
Down on a dust of foliage random blown,  
But could not rest for musing how to  
smoothe  
And sleek his marriage over to the Queen  
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all  
The tonguesters of the court she had not  
heard  
But then what folly had sent him overseas  
After she left him lonely here? a name?  
Was it the name of one in Brittany,  
Isolt, the daughter of the King? 'Isolt  
Of the white hands' they call'd her the  
sweet name

Allured him first, and then the maid her  
self,  
Who served him well with those white  
hands of hers,  
And loved him well, until himself had  
thought  
He loved her also, wedded easily,  
But left her all as easily, and return'd  
The black-blue Irish hue and Irish eyes  
Had drawn him home—what marvel?  
then he had  
His brows upon the dusted leaf and  
dream'd

He seem'd to pace the strand of Brittany  
Between Isolt of Britun and his bride,  
And show'd them both the ruby chain,  
and both

Began to struggle for it, till his Queen  
Graspt it so hard, that all her hand was red  
Then cried the Breton, 'Look, her hand  
is red!

These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,  
And melts within her hand—her hand is  
hot

With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,  
Is all as cool and white as any flower!  
Follow'd a rush of eagle's wings, and then  
A whimpering of the spirit of the child,  
Because the tyrant had spoil'd her crown  
crown

He dream'd, but Arthur with a hun-  
dred spears  
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable sea,  
And many a glancing plish and fallow  
isle,

The wide wind and sunset of the misty marsh  
Glared on a huge machicolated tower  
That stood with open doors, whereout  
was toll'd

A roar of riot, as from men secure  
Amid their marshes, utters at their ease  
Among their harlot-brides, an evil song  
'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth,  
for there,

High on a grim dead tree before the tower,  
A goodly brother of the Table Round  
Swung by the neck and on the boughs  
a shield

Showing a shower of blood in a field now,  
And therebeside a hoim, inflamed the  
knights

At that dishonour done the gilded spur,  
Till each would clash the shield, and blow  
the horn

But Arthur waved them back Alone he  
rode

Then at the dry harsh roar of the great  
horn,

That sent the face of all the marsh aloft  
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud  
Of shock and plume, the Red Knight  
heard, and all,

Even to utmost lance and topmost helm,  
In blood-red armour sallying, howl'd to  
the King,

'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash  
thee flat!—

Lo! at thou not that eunuch-hearted  
King

Who fain had clipt free manhood from  
the world—

The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's  
curse, and I!

Slain was the brother of my paramour  
By a knight of thine, and I that heard  
her whine

And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,  
Swore by the scorpion worm that twists  
in hell,

And stung itself to everlasting death,  
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought  
And tumbled Art thou King?—Look  
to thy life!

He ended Arthur knew the voice, the  
face

Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the  
name

Went wandering somewhere dawning in  
his mind

And Arthur design'd not use of word or  
sword,

But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from  
horse

to strike him, overbalancing his bulk,  
Down from the causeway heavily to the  
swamp

Fall, as the crest of some slow aching  
 wave,  
 Heard in dead night along that table-  
 shore,  
 Drops flat, and after the great waters  
 break  
 Whiten'g for half a league, and thin  
 themselves,  
 Far over sands marbled with moon and  
 cloud,  
 From less and less to nothing, thus he fell  
 Head heavy, then the knights, who  
 watch'd him, roar'd  
 And shouted and leapt down upon the  
 fall'n,  
 There trampled out his face from being  
 known,  
 And sank his head in mire, and slimed  
 themselves  
 Nor heard the King for their own cries,  
 but sprang  
 Thio' open doors, and swording right and  
 left  
 Men, women, on their sodden faces,  
 hurl'd  
 The tables over and the wines, and slew  
 Till all the rafters rang with woman yell,  
 And all the pavement stream'd with  
 massacre  
 Then, yell with yell echoing, they fired  
 the tower,  
 Which half that autumn night, like the  
 live North,  
 Red pulsing up thio' Alioth and Alcor,  
 Made all above it, and a hundred meics  
 About it, as the water Moab saw  
 Come round by the East, and out beyond  
 them flush'd  
 The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea

So all the ways were safe from shore to  
 shore,  
 But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red  
 dream  
 Fled with a shout, and that low lodge  
 return'd,  
 Mid-forest, and the wind among the  
 boughs

He whistled his good walhorse left to  
 graze  
 Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,  
 And rode beneath an ever showering leaf,  
 Till one lone woman, weeping near a  
 cross,  
 Stay'd him 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,'  
 she said, 'my man  
 Hath left me or is dead,' whereon he  
 thought—  
 'What, if she hate me now? I would  
 not this  
 What, if she love me still? I would not  
 that  
 I know not what I would'—but sud to  
 her,  
 'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate  
 return,  
 He find thy favour changed and love thee  
 not'—  
 Then pressing day by day thio' Lyonesse  
 Last in a rocky hollow, belling, heard  
 The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly  
 hounds  
 Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and  
 gun'd  
 Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,  
 A crown of towers

Down in a crissement sat,  
 A low sea sunset gloying round her hair  
 And glossy throated grace, Isolt the  
 Queen  
 And when she heard the feet of Tristram  
 grind  
 The spring stone that scaled about her  
 tower,  
 Flush'd, started, met him at the doors,  
 and there  
 Belted his body with her white embrace,  
 Crying aloud, 'Not Mark—not Mark,  
 my soul'  
 The footstep flutter'd me at first not he  
 Cathlike thro' his own castle steals my  
 Mark,  
 But warrior wise thou studest thio' his  
 halls  
 Who hates thee, as I him—even to the  
 death  
 My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark

Quickened within me, and knew that thou  
 wert nigh;  
 To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am  
 here  
 Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine'

And drawing somewhat backward she  
 replied,  
 'Can he be wond'g who is not even his  
 own,  
 But save for dread of thee had beaten me,  
 Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, marr'd me  
 somehow—Mark?  
 What rights are his that dare not strike  
 for them?  
 Not lift a hand—not, tho' he found me  
 thus!  
 But harken! have ye met him? hence he  
 went  
 To-day for three days' hunting—as he  
 said—  
 And so returns belike within an hour  
 Mark's way, my soul—but eat not thou  
 with Mark,  
 Because he hates thee even more than  
 fears,  
 Nor drink and when thou passest any  
 wood  
 Close nigh, lest an arrow from the bush  
 Should leave me all alone with Mark and  
 hell  
 My God, the measure of my hate for  
 Mark  
 Is as the measure of my love for thee'

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one  
 by love,  
 Drun'd of her force, again she sat, and  
 spake  
 To Tristram, as he knelt before her,  
 saying,  
 'O hunter, and O blower of the horn,  
 Husher, and thou hast been a lover too,  
 For ere I mated with my shambling king,  
 Ye twain had fallen out about the bride  
 Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,  
 If prize she was—(what marvel—she  
 could see)—  
 Thine, friend, and ever since my craven  
 socks

To wick thee villainously but, O Sir  
 Knight,  
 What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to  
 last?

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen  
 Paramount,  
 Here now to my Queen Paramount of love  
 And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when  
 first  
 Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse,  
 Sailing from Ireland'

Softly laugh'd Isolt,  
 'Flutter me not, for hath not our great  
 Queen  
 My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said,  
 'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine  
 thine,  
 And thine is more to me—soft, gracious,  
 kind—  
 Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips  
 Most gracious, but she, haughty, even to  
 him,  
 Lancelot, for I have seen him wane enow  
 To make one doubt if ever the great Queen  
 Have yielded him her love'

To whom Isolt,  
 'Ah then, false hunter and false harper,  
 thou  
 Who brakest thro' the scruple of my  
 bond,  
 Calling me thy white hind, and saying  
 to me  
 That Guinevere had sinn'd against the  
 highest,  
 And I—misjoked with such a want of  
 man—  
 That I could hardly sin against the lowest'

He answer'd, 'O my soul, be com-  
 forted!  
 If this be sweet, to sin in leading strings,  
 If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,  
 Crown'd warrant had we for the crowning  
 sin  
 That made us happy but how ye greet  
 me—fear  
 And fault and doubt—no word of that  
 fond tale—

Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet  
memories  
Of Tristram in that year he was away'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake  
Isolt,

'I had forgotten all in my strong joy  
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour  
by hour,

Here in the never ended afternoon,  
O sweeter than all memories of thee,  
Deeper than any yearnings after thee  
Seem'd those far rolling, westward  
smiling seas,

Watch'd from this tower Isolt of Britain  
dash'd

Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,  
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss?  
Wedded her?

Fought in her father's battles? wounded  
there?

The King was all fulfill'd with grateful  
ness,

And she, my namesake of the hands, that  
he'd

Thy hut and heart with unguent and  
caress—

Well—can I wish her any huger wrong  
Than having known thee? her too hast  
thou left

To pine and waste in those sweet  
memories

O were I not my Mark's, by whom all  
men

Are noble, I should hate thee more than  
love'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands,  
replied,

'Grace, Queen, for being loved she  
loved me well

Did I love her? the name at least I loved  
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!

The night was dark, the true star set  
Isolt!

The name was ruler of the dark——Isolt?  
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful,

meek,

Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to  
God'

And Isolt answer'd, 'Yea, and why  
not I?

Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,  
Pale-blooded, prayerful Let me tell  
thee now

Here one black, mute midsummer night  
I sat,

Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering  
where,

Murmuring a light song I had heard thee  
sing,

And once or twice I spake thy name aloud  
Then flash'd a levin brand, and near me  
stood,

In fuming sulphur blue and green, a  
fiend—

Mark's way to steal behind one in the  
dark—

For there was Mark "He has wedded  
her," he said,

Not said, but hiss'd it then this crown  
of towers

So shook to such a roar of all the sky,  
That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,

And woke again in utter dark, and cried,  
"I will flee hence and give myself to  
God"—

And thou wert lying in thy new leman's  
arms'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her  
hand,

'May God be with thee, sweet, when old  
and gray,

And past desire! a saying that anger'd  
her

"May God be with thee, sweet, when  
thou art old,

And sweet no more to me!" I need  
Him now

For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so  
gross

Ev'n to the swineherd's malkin in the  
mast?

The greater man, the greater courtesy  
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's

knight!

But thou, thio' ever hounding thy wild  
beasts—

Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance

Becomes thee well—at grown wild beast  
thyself

How darest thou, if lover, push me even  
In fancy from thy side, and set me free  
In the gray distance, half a life away,  
Hither to be loved no more? Unsay it,  
unswear!

Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,  
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,  
Thy marriage and mine own, that I  
should suck

Lies like sweet wines hither to me I believe  
Will ye not lie? not swear, as thou ye  
kneel,

And solemnly as when ye swore to him,  
The man of men, our King—My God,  
the power

Was once in vows when men believed the  
King!

They lied not then, who swore, and thro'  
their vows

The King prevailing made his realm —  
I say,

Swear to me thou wilt love me even when  
old,

Gray hair'd, and past desire, and in de-  
spair!

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and  
down,

'Vows! did you keep the vow you made  
to Mark

More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay,  
but leant,

The vow that binds too strictly snaps  
itself—

My knighthood taught me this—ay, being  
snapt—

We run more counter to the soul thereof  
Than had we never sworn I swear no  
more

I swore to the great King, and am for  
sworn

For once—even to the height—I honour'd  
him

"Man, is he man at all?" methought,  
when first

I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and  
beheld

That victor of the Pygmy throned in hall—

His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow  
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel  
blue eyes,

The golden beard that clothed his lips  
with light—

Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,  
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end  
Amazed me, then, his foot was on a stool  
Shaped as a dragon, he seem'd to me no  
man,

But Michael trampling Satan, so I swore,  
Being amazed but this went by—The  
vows!

O ay—the wholesome madness of an  
hour—

They served their use, then time, for  
every knight

Believed himself a greater than himself,  
and every follower eyed him as a God;  
All he, being lifted up beyond himself,  
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had  
done,

And so the realm was made, but then  
their vows—

First mainly thro' that sullying of our  
Queen—

Began to gall the knighthood, asking  
whence

Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?  
Dropt down from heaven? wash'd up  
from out the deep?

They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh  
and blood

Of our old kings whence then? a doubt-  
ful lord

To bind them by inviolable vows,  
Which flesh and blood perforce would  
violate

For feel this arm of mine—the tide within  
Red with free chase and heathen-scented  
air,

Pulsing full man, can Arthur make me  
pure

As any maiden child? lock up my tongue  
From uttering freely what I freely hear?

Bind me to one? The wide world  
laughs at it

And worldling of the world am I, and  
know

The pilgrimage that whitens ere his hour

Woos his own end, we are not angels here  
 Nor shall be vows—I am woodman of  
     the woods,  
 And hear the garnet headed yaffingale  
 Mock them my soul, we love but while  
     we may,  
 And therefore is my love so huge for thee,  
 Seeing it is not bounded save by love'

Here ending, he moved toward her,  
 and she said,  
 'Good an I turn'd away my love for thee  
 To some one thicke as countous as thy-  
     self—

For courtesy wins woman all as well  
 As valour may, but he that closes both  
 Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,  
 Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved  
 This knightliest of all knights, and cast  
     thee back

Thine own small saw, "We love but  
     while we may,"  
 Well then, what answer?

He that while she spake,  
 Mindful of what he brought to adorn her  
     with,  
 The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch  
 The warm white apple of her throat,  
     replied,

'Press this a little closer, sweet, until—  
 Come, I am hunger'd and half anger'd—  
     mert,  
 Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the  
     death,  
 And out beyond into the dream to come'

So then, when both were brought to  
     full accord,  
 She rose, and set before him all he will'd,  
 And after these had comforted the blood  
 With meats and wines, and satiated their  
     hearts—  
 Now talking of their woodland paradise,  
 The deer, the dewes, the fern, the founts,  
     the lawns,  
 Now mocking at the much ungainliness,  
 And craven shifts, and long crane legs of  
     Mark—  
 Then Tristram laughing caught the harp,  
     and sang

Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend  
     the brier'

A star in heaven, a star within the meire'  
 Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,  
 And one was far apart, and one was near  
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the  
     grass'

And one was water and one star was fire,  
 And one will ever shine and one will pass  
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the  
     meire'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tris-  
     tram show'd  
 And swung the ruby cecanet She cried,  
 'The collar of some Order, which our  
     King  
 Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,  
 For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy  
     peers'

'Not so, my Queen,' he said, 'but the  
     old fust  
 Grown on a magic oak tree in mid heaven,  
 And won by Tristram as a tourney prize,  
 And hither brought by Tristram for his  
     last  
 Love offering and peace offering unto  
     thee'

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging  
     round her neck,  
 Claspt it, and cried 'Thine Order, O my  
     Queen!'  
 But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd  
     throat,  
 Out of the dark, just as the lips had  
     touch'd,  
 Behind him rose a shadow and a shield—  
 'Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him  
     thru' the brain

That night came Arthur home, and  
     while he climb'd,  
 All in a death-dumb autumn dipping  
     gloom,  
 The stairway to the hall, and look'd and  
     saw  
 The great Queen's bowels was dark,—  
     about his feet  
 A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,



'What art thou?' and the voice about his  
feet  
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy  
fool,  
And I shall never make thee smile again'

## GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court,  
and sat  
There in the holy house at Almesbury  
Weeping, none with her save a little  
maid,  
A novice once low light betwixt them  
burn'd  
Blind'd by the creeping mist, for all  
abroad,  
Beneath a moon unscen albeit at full,  
The white mist, like a face cloth to the  
face,  
Clung to the dead earth, and the land  
was still

For hither had she fled, her cause of  
flight  
Sir Modred, he that like a subtle beast  
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the  
throne,  
Ready to spring, waiting a chance for  
this  
He chill'd the popular praises of the King  
With silent smiles of slow disparagement  
And tamper'd with the Lords of the  
White Horse,  
Hearthen, the brood by Hengist left, and  
sought  
To make disruption in the Table Round  
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds  
Serving his traitorous end, and all his  
aims  
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot

For thus it chanced one morn when  
all the court,  
Green-suited, but with plumes that  
mock'd the may,  
Had been, then went, a-maying and  
return'd,  
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,

Climb'd to the high top of the garden  
wall  
To spy some secret scandal if he might,  
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her  
best

Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court  
The wisest and the worst, and more  
than this

He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by  
Spied where he couch'd, and as the  
gardener's hand

Picks from the colewort a green cater  
pillar,

So from the high wall and the flowering  
grove

Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the  
heel,

And cast him as a worm upon the way,  
But when he knew the Prince tho' man'd  
with dust,

He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,  
Made such excuses as he might, and these  
Full knightly without scorn, for in those  
days

No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in  
scorn,

But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him  
By those whom God had made full limb'd  
and tall,

Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,  
And he was answer'd softly by the King  
And all his Table So Sir Lancelot help  
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or  
thrice

Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled,  
and went

But, ever after, the small violence done  
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,  
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long  
A little bitter pool about a stone  
On the bare coast

But when Sir Lancelot told  
This matter to the Queen, at first she  
laugh'd

Rightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,  
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who  
cries

I shudder, some one steps across my  
grave.'

Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed  
 She half foresaw that he, the subtle beast,  
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers  
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn  
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,  
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,  
 Herut hiding smile, and gray persistent eye  
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend  
 the soul,  
 To help it from the death that cannot die,  
 And save it even in extremes, began  
 To vex and plague her Many a time for  
 hours,  
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,  
 In the dead night, grim faces came and  
 went  
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—  
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking  
 doors,  
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,  
 That keeps the rust of murder on the  
 walls—  
 Held her awake or if she slept, she  
 dream'd  
 An awful dream, for then she seem'd to  
 stand  
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,  
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her  
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew  
 Before it, till it touch'd her, and she  
 turn'd—  
 When lo! her own, that broadening from  
 her feet,  
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land,  
 and in it  
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke  
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew,  
 Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless  
 King,  
 And trustful courtesies of household life,  
 Became her bane, and at the last she  
 said,  
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own  
 land,  
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,  
 And if we meet again, some evil chance

Will make the smouldering scandal break  
 and blaze  
 Before the people, and our lord the King'  
 And Lancelot ever promised, but he  
 main'd,  
 And still they met and met Again she  
 said,  
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee  
 hence'  
 And then they were agreed upon a night  
 (When the good King should not be there)  
 to meet  
 And part for ever Passion pale they met  
 And greeted hands in hands, and eye  
 to eye,  
 Low on the border of her couch they sat  
 Stammering and staring it was then  
 last hour,  
 A madness of farewells And Modred  
 brought  
 His creatures to the basement of the tower  
 For testimony, and crying with full voice  
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trait at last,'  
 aroused  
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike  
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong,  
 and he fell  
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bore  
 him off,  
 And all was still then she, 'The end is  
 come,  
 And I am shamed for ever,' and he said,  
 'Mine be the shame, mine was the sin  
 but use,  
 And fly to my strong castle overseas  
 There will I hide thee, till my life shall  
 end,  
 There hold thee with my life against the  
 world'  
 She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold  
 me so?  
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our fare-  
 wells  
 Would God that thou couldst hide me  
 from myself'  
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou  
 Unwedded yet use now, and let us fly,  
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,  
 And bide my doom' So Lancelot got  
 her horse,

Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,  
And then they rode to the divided way,  
There kiss'd, and parted weeping for  
he past,

Love loyal to the least wish of the Queen,  
Back to his land, but she to Almesbury  
Fled all night long by glimmering waste  
and weald,

And heard the Spirits of the waste and  
weald

Moan as she fled, or thought she heard  
them moan

And in herself she mourn'd 'Too late, too  
late'

Till in the cold wind that forebuds the  
morn,

A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,  
Cioak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a  
field of death,

For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,  
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the  
court,

Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land'

And when she came to Almesbury she  
spoke

There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine  
enemies

Pursue me, but, O perforceful Sisterhood,  
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask  
Hear name to whom ye yield it, till her  
time

To tell you' and her beauty, grace and  
power,

Wrought as a charm upon them, and  
they spared

To ask it

So the stately Queen abode  
For many a week, unknown, among the  
nuns,

Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,  
nor sought,

Wropt in her grief, for house or for  
shift,

But communed only with the little maid,  
Who pleased her with a babbling heed-  
lessness

Which often lured her from herself, but  
now,

This night, a rumour wildly blown about  
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the  
realm,

And leagued him with the heathen, while  
the King

Was waging war on Lancelot then she  
thought,

'With what a hate the people and the  
King

Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon  
her hands

Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd  
No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late' so  
late'

What hour, I wonder, now?' and when  
she drew

No answer, by and by began to hum  
An air the nuns had taught her, 'Late,  
so late'

Which when she heard, the Queen look'd  
up, and said,

'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,  
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may  
weep'

Whereat full willingly sang the little  
maid

'Late, late, so late' and dark the  
night and chill'

I ate, late, so late' but we can enter still  
Too late, too late' ye cannot enter now

'No light had we for that we do  
repent,

And leaving this, the bridegroom will  
relent

Too late, too late' ye cannot enter now

'No light so late' and dark and chill  
the night'

O let us in, that we may find the light'  
Too late, too late' ye cannot enter now

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is  
so sweet?

O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet'  
No, no, too late' ye cannot enter now'

So sang the novice, while full passion-  
ately,

Her head upon her hands, remembering

Her thought when first she came, wept  
the sad Queen  
Then said the little novice prattling to her,

‘O pray you, noble lady, weep no  
more,  
But let my words, the words of one so  
small,

Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,  
And if I do not there is penance given—  
Comfort your sorrows, for they do not  
flow

From evil done, I might sure am I of that,  
Who see your tender grace and stateliness,  
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the  
King’s,

And weighing find them less, for gone is  
he

To wage gum war against Sir Lancelot  
there,

Round that strong castle where he holds  
the Queen,

And Modred whom he left in charge of  
all,

The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King’s  
grief

For his own self, and his own Queen, and  
realm,

Must needs be thrice as great as any of  
ours

For me, I thank the saints, I am not  
great

For if there ever come a grief to me  
I cry my cry in silence, and have done  
None knows it, and my tears have brought  
me good

But even were the griefs of little ones  
As great as those of great ones, yet this  
grief

Is added to the griefs the great must  
bear,

That howsoever much they may desire  
Silence, they cannot weep behind a  
cloud

As even here they talk at Almesbury  
About the good King and his wicked  
Queen,

And were I such a King with such a Queen,  
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,  
But were I such a King, it could not be

Then to her own sad heart mutter’d the  
Queen,  
‘Will the child kill me with her innocent  
talk?’

But openly she answer’d, ‘Must not I,  
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,  
Grieve with the common grief of all the  
realm?’

‘Yea,’ said the maid, ‘this is all  
woman’s grief,

That she is woman, whose disloyal life  
Hath wrought confusion in the Table  
Round

Which good King Arthur founded, years  
ago,

With signs and miracles and wonders,  
there

At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen’

Then thought the Queen within herself  
again,

‘Will the child kill me with her foolish  
prate?’

But openly she spake and said to her,  
‘O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,

What canst thou know of Kings and  
Tables Round,

Or what of signs and wonders, but the  
signs

And simple miracles of thy nunnery?’

To whom the little novice gravely,  
‘Yea, but I know the land was full of  
signs

And wonders ere the coming of the Queen  
So said my father, and himself was knight

Of the great Table—at the founding of it  
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and  
he said

That as he rode, an hour or maybe two  
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard  
Strange music, and he paused, and turn  
ing—there,

All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,  
Each with a beacon star upon his head,  
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,  
He saw them—headland after headland  
flame

Far on into the rich heart of the west

And in the light the white mermaiden  
 swam,  
 And strong man-breasted things stood  
 from the sea,  
 And sent a deep sea voice thro' all the  
 land,  
 To which the little elves of chasm and cleft  
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn  
 So said my father—yea, and furthermore,  
 Next morning, while he past the dim lit  
 woods,  
 Himself beheld three spirits mad with  
 joy  
 Come dashing down on a tall wayside  
 flower,  
 That shook beneath them, as the thistle  
 shakes  
 When three gray linnets wrangle for the  
 seed  
 And still at evenings on before his house  
 The flickering fairy circle wheel'd and  
 broke  
 Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and  
 broke  
 Flying, for all the land was full of life  
 And when at last he came to Camelot,  
 A wreath of my dances hand in hand  
 Swung round the lighted lantern of the  
 hall,  
 And in the hall itself was such a feast  
 As never man had dream'd, for every  
 knight  
 Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served  
 By hands unseen, and even as he said  
 Down in the cellars many bloated things  
 Shouldered the spigot, straddling on the  
 butts  
 While the wine ran so glad were spirits  
 and men  
 Before the coming of the sinful Queen'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat  
 bitterly,  
 'Were they so glad? all prophets were  
 they all,  
 Spirits and men could none of them  
 foresee,  
 Not even thy wise father with his signs  
 And wonders, what his fall'n upon the  
 realm?'

To whom the rovice garrulously again,  
 'Yea, one, a bard, of whom my father  
 said,  
 Full many a noble war song had he sung,  
 Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,  
 Between the steep cliff and the coming  
 wave,  
 And many a mystic lay of life and death  
 Had chanted on the smoky mountain  
 tops,  
 When round him bent the spirits of the  
 hills  
 With all their dewy hair blown back like  
 flame  
 So said my father—and that night the bard  
 Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang  
 the King  
 As wellnigh more than man, and said at  
 those  
 Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois  
 For there was no man knew from whence  
 he came,  
 But after tempest, when the long wave  
 broke  
 All down the thundering shores of Bude  
 and Los,  
 There came a day as still as heaven, and  
 then  
 They found a naked child upon the sands  
 Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,  
 And that was Arthur, and they foster'd  
 him  
 Till he by miracle was approved King  
 And that his grave should be a mystery  
 From all men, like his birth, and could  
 he find  
 A woman in her womanhood as great  
 As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,  
 The twain together well might change the  
 world  
 But even in the middle of his song  
 He falter'd, and his hand fell from the  
 harp,  
 And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would  
 have fall'n,  
 But that they stay'd him up, nor would  
 he tell  
 His vision, but what doubt that he fore-  
 saw  
 This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

He spared to lift his hand against the King  
Who made him knight but many a  
knight was slain,

And many more, and all his kith and kin  
Came to him, and abode in his own land  
And many more when Modred raised  
revolt,

Forgetful of their oath and fealty, came  
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me  
And of this remnant will I leave a part  
True men who love me still, for whom I  
live,

To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,  
Lest but a hur of this low head be hum'd  
Fear not thou shalt be guarded till my  
death

Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies  
Have err'd not, that I much to meet my  
doom

Thou hast not made my life so sweet to  
me,

That I the King should greatly care to  
live,

For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life  
Bear with me for the last time while I  
show,

Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast  
sinn'd

For when the Roman left us, and their law  
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways  
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a  
dead

Of prowess, done redress'd a random  
wrong

But I was first of all the kings who drew  
The knighthood errant of this realm and  
all

The realms together under me, their  
Heard,

In that fair Order of my Table Round,  
A glorious company, the flower of men,  
To serve as model for the mighty world,  
And be the fount beginning of a time  
I made them lay their hands in mine and  
sweat

To reverence the King, as if he were  
Their conscience, and their conscience is  
their King,

To break the heathen and uphold the  
Christ,

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
To honour his own word as if his God's,  
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,  
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
Until they won her, for indeed I knew  
Of no more subtle master under heaven  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable  
words

And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a  
man

And all this throve before I wedded thee,  
Believing, "to mine helpmate, one to feel  
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy"

Then came thy shameful sin with Lance  
lot,

Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt,  
Then others, following these my mightiest  
knights,

And drawing foul ensample from fair  
names,

Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite  
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,  
And all thro' thee ' so that this life of mine  
I giv'd as God's high gift from scathe  
and wrong,

Not greatly care to lose, but rather think  
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,  
To sit once more within his lonely hall,  
And miss the wonted number of my  
knights,

And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds  
As in the golden days before thy sin  
For which of us, who might be left, could  
speak

Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at  
thee?

And in thy bowels of Camelot or of Uruk  
Thy shadow still would glide from room  
to room,

And I should evermore be vexed with thee  
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,  
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair  
For think not tho' thou wouldst not love  
thy lord,

Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee

I am not made of so slight elements  
Yet must I leave thee, worn, to thy  
shame

I hold that man the worst of public foes  
Who either for his own or children's sake,  
To save his blood from scandal, lets the  
wife

Whom he knows false, abide and rule the  
house

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd  
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,  
She like a new disease, unknown to men,  
Creeps, no precaution used, among the  
crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and  
saps

The fealty of our friends, and stirs the  
pulse

With devil's leaps, and poisons half the  
young

Worst of the worst were that man he that  
reigns!

Better the King's waste hearth and aching  
heart

Than thou seated in thy place of light,  
The mockery of my people, and their  
bane.

He paused, and in the pause she crept  
an inch

Nearer, and hid her hands about his feet  
Far off a solitary trumpet blew

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse  
neigh'd

As at a friend's voice, and he spoke again

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy  
crimes,

I did not come to censure thee, Guinevere,  
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die  
To see thee, lying there thy golden head,  
My pride in happier summers, at my feet  
The wrath which forced my thoughts on  
that fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming  
death,

(When first I found thee hidden here) is  
past

The pang—which while I weigh'd thy  
heart with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,  
Made my tears burn—is also past—in  
pain

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,  
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God  
Forgives—do thou for thine own soul the  
rest

But how to take last leave of all I loved?  
O golden hair, with which I used to play  
Not knowing! O imperial moulded form,  
And beauty such as never woman wore,  
Until it came a kingdom's curse with  
thee—

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,  
But Lancelot's—nay, they never were the  
King's

I cannot take thy hand, that too is flesh,  
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd, and  
mine own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries  
"I love thee" yet not less, O Guine-  
vere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,  
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my  
life

So far, that my doom is, I love thee still  
Let no man dream but that I love thee still  
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,  
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,  
Hereafter in that world where all are pure  
We two may meet before high God, and  
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine,  
and know

I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,  
Nor Lancelot, nor another—Leave me  
that,

I charge thee, my last hope—Now must  
I hence

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet  
blow

They summon me their King to lead mine  
hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,  
Where I must strike against the man they  
call

My sister's son—no kin of mine, who  
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,  
and I nights,

Tutors—and strike him dead, and meet  
myself  
Death, or I know not what mysterious  
doom  
And thou remaining here wilt learn the  
event,  
But hither shall I never come again,  
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more—  
Farewell!’

And while she grovelling at his feet,  
She felt the King’s breath wander o’er her  
neck,  
And in the darkness o’er her fallen head,  
Perceived the waving of his hands that  
blest

Then, listening till those rumed steps  
were gone,  
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish  
found  
The casement ‘peradventure,’ so she  
thought,  
‘If I might see his face, and not be seen’  
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!  
And near him the six nuns with each a  
light  
Stood, and he gave them charge about the  
Queen,  
To guard and foster her for evermore  
And while he spoke to these his helm was  
lower’d,  
To which for crest the golden dragon  
clung  
Of Britain, so she did not see the face,  
Which then was as an angel’s, but she  
saw,  
Wet with the mists and smitten by the  
lights,  
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship  
Blaze, making all the night a storm of  
fire  
And even then he turn’d, and more and  
more  
The moony vapour rolling round the King,  
Who seem’d the phantom of a Giant in it,  
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him  
gray  
And grayer, till himself became as mist  
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom

Then she stretch’d out her arms and  
cried aloud  
‘Oh Arthur!’ there her voice brake  
suddenly,  
Then—as a stream that spouting from a  
cliff  
Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base  
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the  
vale—  
Went on in passionate utterance

‘Gone—my lord!’  
Gone thro’ my sin to slay and to be slain!  
And he forgave me, and I could not speak  
Farewell? I should have answer’d his  
farewell  
His mercy choked me    Gone, my lord  
the King,  
My own true lord! how dare I call him  
mine?  
The shadow of another cleaves to me,  
And makes me one pollution he, the  
King,  
Call’d me polluted    shall I kill myself?  
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,  
If soul be soul, nor can I kill my shame,  
No, nor by living can I live it down  
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks  
to months,  
The months will add themselves and make  
the years,  
The years will roll into the centuries,  
And mine will ever be a name of scorn  
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame  
Let the world be, that is but of the world  
What else? what hope? I think there was  
a hope,  
Except he mock’d me when he spoke of  
hope,  
His hope he call’d it, but he never mocks,  
For mockery is the fume of little hearts  
And blessed be the King, who hath for-  
given  
My wickedness to him, and left me hope  
That in mine own heart I can live down  
sin  
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens  
Before high God    Ah great and gentle  
lord,  
Who wast, as is the conscience of a sinner



Among his warring senses, to thy  
knights—  
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that  
took  
Full easily all impressions from below,  
Would not look up, or half despised the  
height  
To which I would not or I could not  
climb—  
I thought I could not breathe in that fine  
air  
That pure seventy of perfect light—  
I wanted warmth and colour which I  
found  
In Iancelot—now I see thee what thou  
art,  
Thou art the highest and most human  
too,  
Not Lancelot, nor another Is there  
none  
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?  
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle?  
none  
Myself must tell him in that pure life,  
But now it were too daring Ah my  
God,  
What might I not have made of thy fur  
world,  
Had I but loved thy highest creature  
here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest  
It surely was my profit had I known  
It would have been my pleasure had I  
seen  
We needs must love the highest when we  
see it,  
Not Lancelot, nor another '  
  
Here her hand  
Grasp'd, made her veil her eyes she  
look'd and saw  
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said  
to her,  
'Yer little maid, for am I not forgiven?'  
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns  
All round her, weeping, and her heart  
was loosed  
Within her, and she wept with these and  
said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one,  
who broke  
The vast design and purpose of the King  
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery  
walls,  
Meek maidens, from the voices crying  
"shame"  
I must not scorn myself he loves me still  
Let no one dream but that he loves me  
still  
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,  
Not shun to call me sister, dwell with  
you,  
Wear black and white, and be a nun like  
you,  
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with  
your feasts,  
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at  
your joys,  
But not rejoicing, mingle with your rites,  
Pray and be pray'd for, lie before your  
shrines,  
Do each low office of your holy house,  
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole  
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes  
Who ransom'd us, and slier too than I,  
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal  
mine own,  
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer  
I he sombre close of that voluptuous day,  
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the  
King'

She said they took her to themselves,  
and she  
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'  
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess  
died  
Then she, for her good deeds and her  
pure life,  
And for the power of ministration in her,  
And likewise for the high rank she had  
borne,  
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess,  
lived  
For three brief years, and there, an  
Abbess, past  
To where beyond these voices there is  
peace

*End of 'The Round Table'*

## THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,  
First made and latest left of all the  
knights,  
Told, when the man was no more than a  
voice

In the white winter of his age, to those  
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other  
minds

For on their march to westward,  
Bedivere,  
Who slowly paced among the slumbering  
host,  
Heard in his tent the mornings of the  
King

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,  
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His  
fields,

But in His ways with men I find Him not  
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die  
O me! for why is all around us here  
As if some lesser god had made the world,  
But had not force to shape it as he would,  
Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
And enter it, and make it beautiful?  
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,  
But that these eyes of men are dense and  
dim,

And have not power to see it as it is  
Perchance, because we see not to the  
close,—

For I, being simple, thought to walk His  
will,

And have but stricken with the sword in  
vain.

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend  
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm  
Reels back into the beast, and is no more  
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my  
death

Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall  
not die'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the  
west,

There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain  
kill'd

In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain  
blown

Along a wandering wind, and past his ear  
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all  
delight'

Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass  
away

Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee  
And I am blown along a wandering

wind,  
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight'

And fainter onward, like wild birds that  
change

Then season in the night and wail then  
way

From cloud to cloud, down the long wind  
the dream

Shrill'd, but in going mingled with dream  
notes

Fu in the moonlit haze among the hills,  
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,

When all is lost, and wife and child with  
wail

Pass to new lords, and Arthur woke and  
call'd,

'Who speak? A dream O light upon  
the wind,

Thine, Gawain, was the voice—the these  
dream notes

Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste  
and wild

Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and  
spoke

'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,  
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the  
field,

But in thee stand thy name and glory cling  
To all high places like a golden cloud

For ever—but as yet thou shalt not pass  
Light was Gawain in life, and light in  
death

Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man,  
And care not thou for dreams from him,

but use—  
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,

And with him many of thy people, and  
knights  
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but  
grosser grown  
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and  
thee  
Right well in heart they know thee for  
the King  
Arise, go forth and conquer us of old '

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-  
vere  
'Far other is this battle in the west  
Whereto we move, than when we strove  
in youth,  
And brake the petty kings, and fought  
with Rome,  
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman  
wall,  
And shook him thro' the north Ill doom  
is mine  
To war against my people and my knights  
The king who fights his people fights  
himself  
And they my knights, who loved me once,  
the stroke  
I that strikes them dead is as my death to  
me  
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way  
Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I  
saw  
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,  
With folded in the passes of the world '

Then rose the King and moved his host  
by night,  
And ever push'd Sir Modied, league by  
league,  
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—  
A land of old upheaven from the abyss  
By fire, to sink into the abyss again,  
Where fragments of forgotten peoples  
dwelt,  
And the long mountains ended in a coast  
Of ever shifting sand, and far away  
The phantom circle of a moaning sea  
There the pursuer could pursue no more,  
And he that fled no further fly the King,  
And there, that day when the great light  
of heaven

Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,  
On the waste sand by the waste sea they  
closed  
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight  
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the  
west  
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and  
sea  
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed  
it, died  
Down with his blood, till all his heart was  
cold  
With formless fear, and ev'n on Arthur  
fell  
Confusion, since he saw not whom he  
fought  
For friend and foe were shadows in the  
mist,  
And friend slew friend not knowing whom  
he slew,  
And some had visions out of golden  
youth,  
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts  
Look in upon the battle, and in the mist  
Was many a noble deed, many a base,  
And chance and craft and strength in  
single fights,  
And ever and anon with host to host  
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the  
hard mail hewn,  
Shield breakings, and the clash of brands,  
the crash  
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and  
shrieks  
After the Christ, of those who falling down  
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the  
mist,  
And shouts of heathen and the wailing  
knights,  
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-  
phemies,  
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of  
the lungs  
In that close mist, and cryings for the  
light,  
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead  
  
Last, as by some one deathbed after  
wear  
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death

Of deathlike swoon, thus over all that  
 shore,  
 Save for some whisper of the seething seas,  
 A dead hush fell, but when the dolorous  
 day  
 Grew drier toward twilight falling,  
 came  
 A bitter wind, clear from the North, and  
 blew  
 The mist aside, and with that wind the tide  
 Rose, and the pale King glanced across  
 the field  
 Of battle but no man was moving there,  
 Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,  
 Nor yet of heathen, only the wan wave  
 Brake in among dead faces, to and fro  
 Swaying the helpless hands, and up and  
 down  
 Tumbling the hollow helmets of the  
 fallen,  
 And shiver'd brands that once had fought  
 with Pome,  
 And rolling full along the gloomy shore  
 The voice of days of old and days to be

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-  
 vere,  
 And whiter than the mist that all day long  
 Had held the field of battle was the King

'Hearst thou this great voice that  
 shakes the world,  
 And wastes the narrow realm whereon we  
 move,  
 And beats upon the faces of the dead,  
 My dead, as tho' they had not died for  
 me?—

O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n  
 Confusion, till I know not what I am,  
 Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King  
 Behold, I seem but King among the dead'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere  
 'My King,  
 King everywhere' and so the dead have  
 kings,  
 There also will I worship thee as King  
 Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live  
 Who love thee, but who hates thee, he  
 that brought

The heathen back among us, yonder  
 stands,  
 Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine  
 house'

Then spake the King 'My house hath  
 been my doom  
 But call not thou this traitor of my house  
 Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with  
 me  
 My house are rather they who swore my  
 vows,  
 Yea, even while they brake them, own'd  
 me King  
 And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,  
 When all the purport of my throne hath  
 full'd,  
 That quick or dead thou holdest me for  
 King  
 King am I, whatsoever be thou cry,  
 And one last act of kinghood shalt thou  
 see  
 Yet, ere I pass' And uttering thus the  
 King

Made at the man then Modred's note  
 his hope  
 Had on that helm which many a heathen  
 sword  
 Had beaten thin, while Arthur at one  
 blow,  
 Striking the last stroke with Icaliban,  
 Slew him, and all but slun himself, he fell

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd  
 Among the mountains by the winter sea,  
 Until King Arthur's fable, man by man,  
 Had fall'n in L'yonnesse about their lord,  
 King Arthur then because his wound  
 was deep,  
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land  
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-  
 vere  
 'The sequel of to day unsolders all  
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

Whereof this world holds record    Such  
a sleep  
They sleep—the men I loved    I think  
that we

Shall never more, at any future time,  
Delight our souls with talk of knightly  
deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls  
Of Camelot, as in the days that were  
I perish by this people which I made,—  
Tho' Merlin swore that I should come  
again

To rule once more, but, let what will be,  
be,

I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm  
That without help I cannot last till morn  
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
Which was my pride for thou remem-  
berest how

In those old days, one summer noon, an  
aim

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-  
derful,

Holding the sword—and how I now'd  
across

And took it, and have worn it, like a king,  
And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
In aftertime, this also shall be known  
But now delay not take Excalibur,  
And fling him far into the middle mere  
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring  
me word'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere  
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee  
thus,

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the  
helm—

A little thing may harm a wounded man,  
Yet I thy best will all perform at full,  
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee  
word'

So saying, from the sun'd shine he  
stept,

And in the moon athwart the place of  
tombs,

Where lay the mighty bones of ancient  
men,

Old knights, and over them the sea wind  
sang

Shall, chill, with flakes of foam    He,  
stepping down

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,  
Came on the shining levels of the lake

There drew he forth the brand Excali-  
bur,

And o'er him, drawing it, the winter  
moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud,  
ran forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the  
hilt

For a' the haft twinkled with diamond  
sparks,

Myriads of topaz lights, and jacinth work  
Of subtlest jewellery    He gazed so long

That both his eyes were dazzled as he  
stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,  
In act to throw    but at the last it seem'd  
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd

There in the many knotted waterflags,  
That whistled stiff and dry about the  
margin

So strode he back slow to the wounded  
King

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-  
vere

'Hast thou perform'd my mission which  
I gave?

What is it thou hast seen? or what hast  
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-  
vere

'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,  
And the wild water lapping on the crag'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint  
and pale

'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy  
name,

Not rendering true answer, as becom'd  
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight

For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,  
Or voice, or else a motion of the meek

This is a shameful thing for men to lie

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,  
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing  
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me  
word '

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
Across the ridge, and paced beside the  
meie,  
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in  
thought,  
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,  
How curiously and strangely chased, he  
smote  
His palms together, and he cried aloud

' And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
Should thus be lost for ever from the  
earth,  
Which might have pleased the eyes of  
many men  
What good should follow this, if this were  
done ?  
What harm, undone ? Deep harm to  
disobey,  
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule  
Were it well to obey then, if a king  
demand  
An act unprofitable, against himself ?  
The King is sick, and knows not what  
he does  
What record, or what relic of my lord  
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath  
And rumours of a doubt ? But were this  
kept,  
Stored in some treasure house of mighty  
kings,  
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,  
Saying, " King Arthur's sword, Excali-  
bur,  
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the  
Lake  
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the  
deeps  
Upon the hidden bases of the hills "  
So might some old man speak in the after-  
time  
To all the people, winning reverence  
But now much honour and much fame  
were lost '

So spake he, clouded with his own  
conceit,  
And hid Excalibur the second time,  
And so strode back slow to the wounded  
King

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing  
heavily  
' What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast  
heard ? '

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-  
vere  
' I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds '

To whom replied King Arthur, much  
in wrath  
' Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,  
Unknightly, traitor hearted ! Woe is me !  
Authority forgets a dying king,  
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye  
That bow'd the will I see thee what  
thou art,  
For thou, the latest left of all my knights,  
In whom should meet the offices of all,  
I thou wouldst betray me for the precious  
hilt,  
Either from lust of gold, or like a gull  
Following the giddy pleasure of the eyes  
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,  
And the third time may prosper, get thee  
hence  
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,  
I will arise and slay thee with my hands '

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and  
ran,  
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,  
plunged  
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd  
the sword,  
And strongly wheel'd and threw it The  
great brand  
Made lightnings in the splendour of the  
moon,  
And flashing round and round, and  
whirl'd in an arch,  
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
Seen where the moving isles of winter  
shock

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea  
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur  
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder-  
 derful,  
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd  
 him  
 Three times, and drew him under in the  
 mere  
 And lightly went the other to the King

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing  
 thicker breath  
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done  
 Speak out what is it thou hast heard, or  
 seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-  
 veie  
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the  
 gems  
 Should blind my purpose, for I never  
 saw,  
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,  
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt  
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-  
 ing him,  
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder-  
 derful,  
 That caught him by the hilt, and  
 brandish'd him  
 Three times, and drew him under in the  
 mere'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-  
 ing hard  
 'My end draws nigh, 'tis time that I  
 were gone  
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my  
 weight,  
 And bear me to the margin, yet I fear  
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall  
 die'

So saying, from the pavement he half  
 rose,  
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
 As in a picture Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,  
 And would have spoken, but he found  
 not words,  
 Then took with care, and kneeling on  
 one knee,  
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid  
 hands,  
 And rising bore him thro' the place of  
 tombs

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted  
 hard,  
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
 When all the house is mute So sigh'd  
 the King,  
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear,  
 'Quick, quick!  
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die'  
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to  
 ridge,  
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as  
 he walk'd,  
 Larger than human on the frozen hills  
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
 Before His own thought drove him like  
 a goad  
 Dry clasp'd his harness in the icy caves  
 And barren chasms, and all to left and  
 right  
 The bare black cliff clung'd round him,  
 as he based  
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed  
 heels—  
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
 And the long glories of the winter moon

Then saw they how there hove a dusky  
 barge,  
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
 Beneath them, and descending they were  
 ware  
 That all the decks were dense with stately  
 forms,  
 Black stoled, black hooded, like a dream  
 —by these  
 Three Queens with crowns of gold and  
 from them rose  
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,  
 And, as it were one voice, an agony

Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills  
All night in a waste land, where no one  
comes,  
O! hath come, since the making of the  
world

Then mumur'd Arthur, Place me in  
the baige '  
So to the baige they came There those  
three Queens  
Put forth their hands, and took the King,  
and wept  
But she, that rose the tallest of them all  
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,  
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and  
chafed his hands,  
And call'd him by his name, complaining  
loud,  
And dropping bitter tears against a brow  
Stuped with dark blood for all his face  
was white  
And colourless, and like the wither'd  
moon  
Smote by the flesh beam of the spring-  
ing east,  
And all his graves and cusses dash'd with  
drops  
Of onset, and the light and lustrous  
curls—  
That made his forehead like a rising sun  
High from the dais throne—were puch'd  
with dust,  
O!, clotted into points and hanging loose,  
Mix'd with the knightly growth that  
fringed his lips  
So like a shatter'd column lay the King,  
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in  
rest,  
From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and  
charged  
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings

Then loudly cried the bold Sir  
Bedivere  
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?  
Where shall I hide my forehead and my  
eyes?  
For now I see the true old times are  
dead,

When every morning brought a noble  
chance,  
And every chance brought out a noble  
knight  
Such times have been not since the light  
that led  
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh  
But now the whole Round Table is dis-  
solved  
Which was an image of the mighty world,  
And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
And the days darken round me, and the  
years,  
Among new men, strange faces, other  
minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the  
brigs  
'The old order changeth, yielding place  
to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
I est one good custom should corrupt the  
world  
Comfort thyself what comfort is in me?  
I have lived my life, and that which I  
have done  
May He within himself make pure ' but  
thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul More things are  
wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of Wherefore,  
let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day  
For what women better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of  
prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call  
them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of  
God  
But now farewell I am going a long way  
With thee thou seest—if indeed I go  
(For all my mind is clouded with a  
doubt)—  
To the island valley of Avilion,  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies



Deep meadow'd, happy, fur with orchard  
lawns  
And bowery holms crown'd with summer  
sea,  
Where I will heal me of my grievous  
wound'

So said he, and the barge with oar and  
sail  
Moved from the bank, like some full  
breasted swan  
That, fluting a wild cruel ere her death,  
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes  
the flood  
With swarthy webs Long stood Sir  
Bedivere  
Revolving many memories, till the hull  
Look'd one black dot against the verge of  
dawn,  
And on the moor the wailing died away

But when that moan had past for ever  
more,  
The stillness of the dead world's winter  
dawn  
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King  
is gone'  
And thencewithal came on him the wend  
rhyme,  
'From the great deep to the great deep  
he goes'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly  
clomb  
The last hard footstep of that iron  
crag,

Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,  
and cried,  
'He passes to be King among the dead,  
And after healing of his grievous wound  
He comes again, but—if he come no  
more—  
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black  
boat,  
Who shiek'd and wail'd, the three  
whereat we gazed  
On that high day, when, clothed with  
living light,  
They stood before his throne in silence,  
fiends  
Of Arthur, who should help him at his  
need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there  
came, but faint  
As from beyond the limit of the world,  
Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice  
Around a king returning from his wars

Thereat once more he moved about,  
and clomb  
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and  
saw,  
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,  
Or thought he saw, the speck that bore  
the King,  
Down that long water opening on the deep  
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
From less to less and vanish into light  
And the new sun rose bringing the new  
year

## TO THE QUEEN

O royal to the royal in thyself,  
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—  
Bear witness, that rememberable day,  
When, pale as yet, and fever worn, the  
Prince  
Who service had pluck'd his flickering life  
again  
From halfway down the shadow of the  
grave,  
Past with thee thro' thy people and then  
love,

And I ondon roll'd one tide of joy thro'  
all  
Hither trebled millions, and loud leagues of  
man  
And welcome! witness, too, the silent city,  
Thy prayer of many a race and creed,  
and clime—  
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea  
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,  
And that true North, whereof we lately  
heard

<p>A strain to shame us 'keep you to you selves , So loyal is too costly ! friends—your love Is but a but then loose the bond, and go ' Is this the tone of empire ? here the faith That made us rulers ? this, indeed, her voice And meaning, whom the roar of Hougou- mont Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven ? What shock has fool'd her since, that she should speak So feebly ? wealthier—wealthier—hous- by hous ! The voice of Britain, or a sinking land, Some third rate isle half lost among her seas ? There rang her voice, when the full city peal'd Thee and thy Prince ! The loyal to their crown Are loyal to their own far sons, who love Our ocean empire with her boundless homes For ever broadening England, and her throne In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle, That knows not her own greatness if she knows And dreads it we are fall'n —But thou, my Queen, Not for itself, but thro' thy living love For one to whom I made it o'er his grave Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale, New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost, Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak, And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still, or him</p>	<p>Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleol's, one Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time That hover'd between war and wanton- ness, And crownings and dethronements take withal Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that Heaven Will blow the tempest in the distance back From thine and ours for some are scared, who mark, Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm, Waverings of every one with every wind, And wordy trucklings to the transient hour, And fierce or careless looseners of the faith, And Softness breeding scorn of simple life, Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold, Or Labour, with a groan and not a voice, Or Art with poisonous honey stol'n from France, And that which knows, but careful for itself, And that which knows not, ruling that which knows To its own harm the goal of this great world Lies beyond sight yet—if our slowly grown And crown'd Republic's crowning com- mon sense, That saved her many times, not fail— their fears Are morning shadows huger than the shapes That cast them, not those gloomies which forego The darkness of that battle in the West, Where all of high and holy dies away</p>
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